



State Representative DJ Swearingen
Joint-Sponsor Testimony on House Bill 169
March 10th, 2021

Chairman Edwards, Vice chair Powell, ranking member Upchurch, , and members of the House Economic and Workforce Development Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 169. The food service and lodging industry has been hit hard this past year due to Covid-19 and the lockdown orders that followed. The bill will set aside money for a grant that can applied by bars, restaurants, and lodging businesses.

As many of you know, the bars, restaurants, and lodging industry has been decimated this past year due to Covid-19. The government did not allow these business owners and employees to earn a living for close to a whole calendar year. 67% of hotels will not make it another 6 months given current and projected travel demand without emergency financial assistance. Business owners have lost their business and way of life, suffering hits to their credit ratings, savings, and the ability to give their kids a secure future.

That did not stop at the ownership levels though, tens of thousands of employees were also hit by the measures to combat Covid-19. Due to COVID-19, 29,700 direct hotel jobs (70 percent) and nearly 86,570 supported jobs were lost. They also lost homes, were evicted, lost their savings, and witnessed a decrease in their credit rating. Since the businesses were unable to operate during most of the year 2020, it is only right that we and try to lift these industries back up with allocating 125 million dollars for this grant.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this bill in committee today. I will be happy to answer any questions the committee might have.