April 27, 2020

The Honorable Kate Brown, Governor Oregon
The Honorable Jay Inslee, Governor of Washington
The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor of California

Governors,

As the leaders of associations representing business in your states, we want to thank you for your bold leadership in this time of crisis. You led the nation in adopting strong measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our states and, as a result of that leadership, Oregon, Washington and California have not experienced the level of outbreak that other states have seen.

Business wants to work with you, collectively as a region and individually in each of our states, as we execute a plan for economic recovery. We appreciate the principles you laid out for your restart plan and we would like to work with you in this planning stage.

We were pleased to see the announcement two weeks ago that you would work together on the vitally important job ahead of us, the critical objective of reviving our states' economies and getting people back to work. We agree with the framework you set, that all discussions must lead with protecting the health of the people of our states, and that the economic restart must be executed in a way that protects against spikes in virus incidents that would overwhelm our healthcare systems.

That said, the economic devastation that has resulted from this crisis – with tens of thousands of businesses in our states shutting their doors or cutting back operations, and hundreds of thousands of workers losing their jobs – is causing significant distress among our three states. Families in Oregon, Washington and California have lost their incomes and, even with the temporary relief available through unemployment benefits and the federal stimulus packages, the long-term outlook will remain bleak if we don't immediately start putting our states' economies back on track.

We suggest the principles below be included to your plans for restarting the economy:

Business must help lead the recovery. We know that the economy won't be restarted with the flip of a switch, that we should plan for a phased-in restart of the economy. California's *Business and Jobs Recovery Task Force* announced recently is an example for all states to follow for business inclusion. The phase-in undoubtedly will look different for varying industries and for different regions across our states. Business leaders are eager to work with you to talk through how a restart can be accomplished in different segments of our diverse economies. There are many issues, like workers compensation, liability issues, and a host of other challenges that deserve our first-hand perspective to better inform you about the challenges that lay ahead. Please allow us to work with you to plan and execute how we will restore jobs and incomes for the families of our states.

Expectations must be clear. We do not expect to return to business as usual. The "new normal" in every workplace, including consumer-facing businesses, will include social

distancing, crowd management and infection prevention. Businesses need to understand what will be expected of them now, so that we can begin implementing those changes and be ready to begin the process of reopening. Our goal should be bringing our employees back to work, and customers back to businesses, and providing confidence that they will be safe.

Employer concerns must be resolved. As we implement a return-to-work strategy, employers in our states will be called upon to execute new practices, including interacting with employees in ways previously considered outside the bounds of a worker/employer relationship. For example, businesses are likely to be asked to screen employee health and then potentially take actions based on the results of the screening. We know testing must be a crucial element of a successful framework and we would like to work with you on how that will be part of the return-to-work strategy. We want to ensure other supplies are sufficient, including personal protective equipment, thermometers, sanitizers, etc. Please also consider how the necessary employee screening can occur within the privacy laws we live under, and what kind of liability protections employers will need as they manage this new, untested reality.

Businesses – and individuals – should be allowed to return to work as soon as reasonable safety standards can be met. It is unlikely that any of our states will be in a position to allow all industries and all workers to return to work at the same time. We urge you to adopt flexible policies that allow businesses to resume operations – and displaced individuals to return to work -- as soon as it is practically feasible within an individual industry or geographic region to meet reasonable safety standards. For example, each of our states have counties where there is little or no incidence of the virus; consider allowing business in these regions to begin reopening. Consider allowing less vulnerable workers to return to work, while asking more vulnerable populations to stay home longer. And, finally, take immediate steps to allow industries that have demonstrated the ability to implement safe-work practices, like construction and manufacturing, to reopen if they are currently closed by order.

Different sectors or regions may need different strategies and timelines. The pandemic is hitting industries and regions of our states in varying ways. The strategies for opening should recognize these differences and adjust accordingly. Some industries are particularly hard hit and can reopen safely given the proper guidance and tools. One size may not fit all. We ask you to build some flexibility into your reopening plan to recognize these differences.

The hardest hit industries should receive additional support and consideration. Some industries clearly were hit harder than others, including restaurants, hotels, sports, entertainment, and retail and many businesses will struggle to regain their footing when the stay home orders are lifted. We ask you to work with leaders from these industries to identify the special supports they will require, with an end goal of retaining as many individual businesses and jobs as possible.

Worker retraining should occur sooner rather than later. We recognize that some jobs may be forever lost as a result of the economic displacement that has occurred these last few weeks. We urge you to begin now to design and implement worker retraining programs that will help displaced individuals find new employment as soon as possible, thus mitigating longer-term unemployment and helping to stabilize the economy.

Reviving our economy, and building strength for the long-term, must become a priority.

As we said above, business agrees that the health of our states' residents must be our top priority. But we also urge you to prioritize reviving the economy. The economic devastation caused by this pandemic is unlike anything seen in this country for a century, and if we don't take steps immediately to begin rebuilding the economy the damage may take many years to repair. In the near term, we must begin the process of safely reopening businesses and putting people back to work wherever we can as soon as we can. We also urge you to establish a moratorium on non-COVID rulemakings so businesses and agencies are focused on the work of reviving the economy. In the longer-term, we need a strategy to rebuild and reinvent our states' economies, learning from this event we are still experiencing, so that we emerge with stronger, with quality jobs that support Oregon, Washington and California families. Your strong and focused leadership will get us there.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unparalleled challenge in our states, and we are thankful for your early and bold action. We are equally proud of how business innovation has contributed to the solution. Factories that once made airplanes, running shoes and dental equipment are turning out personal protective equipment. Liquor distilleries are making hand sanitizer. Small businesses are delivering food to vulnerable citizens forced to stay indoors.

We are stronger if we work together. We urge you to act with the same boldness you've shown with the pandemic to address the economic crisis facing our states. We will do everything we can to help you take quick but informed and long-term innovative action to reverse the economic damage that is hitting home for so many families in our state.

Business in your states stands ready to work with you.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kristofer Johnson, President & CEO, Association of Washington Business Steve Mullin, President, Washington Roundtable Sandra McDonough, President & CEO, Oregon Business & Industry Duncan Wyse, President, Oregon Business Council Lance Hastings, President, California Manufacturers & Technology Association Robert Lapsley, President, California Business Roundtable