

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell
Q&A With Witnesses at Subcommittee on Manufacturing, Trade, and Consumer Protection hearing
entitled "Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Live Event Entertainment Industry"

Mr. David Fay, President and Chief Executive Officer, The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts

Mr. Adam Hartke, Owner, Cotillion and WAVE

Mr. Ron Laffitte, President, Patriot Management

Mr. Pete Pantuso, President and Chief Executive Officer, American Bus Association

Mr. Michael Strickland, Owner, Bandit Lites

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Cantwell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks for holding this important hearing and to the witnesses and for people participating, I want to thank thousands of the independent artists and venues who've worked so hard to try to communicate this issue. Obviously in the state of Washington when you're talking about organizations like the Foo Fighters and Dave Matthews Band, Macklemore, Pearl Jam, and many others, you can see that music is a pretty big and important issue to the state of Washington. I want to thank our colleagues Senators Klobuchar and Cornyn for their work on legislation and I was pleased to see there is bipartisan support in a stimulus package, but we have a long way to go to making sure that all becomes a reality.

A survey by the Washington Nightlife Music Association found that without relief, 63% of our states' independently own clubs would have no choice but to permanently close. You guys have been talking about many of those issues and what happens. Even in Spokane, The Pin, a staple of the music scene there, closed its doors and independent venues like Spokane Arena, the Knitting Factory, Martin Woldson Theater at the Fox, and many others are impacted by these closures and looking for relief. So, when I hear these comments this morning and our colleagues, you'd think this would just be a slam dunk, that we could just, if nothing else, just go ahead and pass legislation. For us, it's 38,000 Washingtonians, about a \$2.4 billion music industry, overall, so we don't want to see permanent closure, because it's very hard to start these again.

So could you just--we've been talking a lot about the problem, but could you give, us any of the witnesses, some real life examples of what people are struggling with right now? I mean, so much of our state, they've been they've been trying to hold, on they've been trying to hold on, trying to hold on, because they know that closure means probably permanent closure. But could you give us some examples of what people are trying to do, just to hold on?

Mr. Strickland: Yes, thank you, great question. And to bring up about the great state of Washington, I was involved in an endeavor September 1st called Red Alert Restart where we lit all the buildings red across the nation. The band Pearl Jam from Seattle made magic, thank you very much, in Seattle. I cannot not give them enough kudos. They reached out to me, and then they went to work and turned Seattle red, beginning with the Space Needle and flowing from there. But I have a 1.2 million person email chain. I receive calls and letters and texts. To answer your question, 30% of the businesses have closed. We're not having a conversation at this moment about what might happen. We're having a conversation about what has happened and what is happening, and what will continue to happen.

The smaller companies and what we now call the gig workers, those people have already shifted out of this space, and they're now working at Amazon or somewhere else. They've left the industry that they love, some never to return. We anticipate 20-30% will never return to this space. Some of the smaller companies have shuttered and folded and lost all of their assets through auction, and of course that money doesn't go to them. So I wish I could give you a story of happiness and how people have been able to survive, but the simple truth is, no one is surviving. They are failing daily, and we're not at the edge of the cliff. We've gone over the cliff, and like the cat in the cartoon, most of our industry is hanging on by a thread.

Cantwell: Well, that's exactly what I wanted you to illuminate, so thank you for doing that. We have got to get our colleagues to understand, we need to act now on this legislation. Thank you.