

From: ron@besthq.net ron@BESThq.net
Subject: RE: BestHQ Public Comment for 5/13 PUC Special Public Mtg re COVID-19 Impacts
Date: May 12, 2021 at 10:58 PM
To: Puc.publiccomments@state.or.us
Cc: Diane Henkels diane@utilityadvocates.org



To the PUC Public comment record,

BESThq, www.BESThq.net, a small business and Oregon Benefit Company, has worked with small businesses daily for the better part of ten years renting out office space to businesses and serving as a business incubator to hundreds of firms. As such, we are particularly aware of and sensitive to the unique struggles of small commercial customers throughout the pandemic. Just this year alone, our own business has seen an enormous decrease from nearly 100% occupancy (pre COVID) to our April 2021 closing of our incubator office spaces. We have lost lease payments and tenants as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding general changes in electricity use over the past year, stay-at-home requirements have led to less power being required at work for most small businesses.

We hope the Commission will be sensitive to the detrimental consequences of rate hikes and consider the impact such actions have on small businesses with prudence. This is particularly true now when the effects of lost revenues resulting from the pandemic can be compounded by even marginal net changes to utility costs. Reliable and affordable electricity is essential for the longevity of most, if not all, small businesses.

BESThq supports Small Business Utility Advocates' (SBUA) recommendation for a PUC staff workshop with stakeholders exclusively on the impact of COVID-19 on small commercial customers. For the first time, we believe there is concrete data on the impact of COVID-19 on disconnections and arrearages for small commercial customers. SBUA's recommendation would facilitate meaningful discussion on these matters. By adding workshops with stakeholders and utilities that dive deeper into small commercial costs, the Commission will address the impact of COVID-19 more holistically as opposed to only focusing on residential.

Thank you for your consideration on this important matter.

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