



SEATTLE
UNESCO
City of Literature

PO Box 31040
Seattle, Washington 98103
seattlecityoflit.org

Dear Governor Inslee,

I write as a representative of the nonprofit organization Seattle City of Literature, which has been charged by Mayor Durkan with the management of Seattle's UNESCO Creative City designation. I urgently and respectfully request that you reclassify bookstores as essential businesses during the COVID-19 crisis.

When Seattle was designated a UNESCO City of Literature in 2017, the designation acknowledged that literature is essential to the vibrancy and vigor of the city and that literature can help to make a "difference and support a more sustainable urban development suited to the practical needs of the local population." One reason Seattle was designated is that our region sustains so many independent bookstores—Washingtonians value access to ideas and information, and we celebrate the many small businesses that help make that possible.

Amazon has stated that they are not prioritizing shipping books, and with both schools and libraries closed, independent bookstores are some of the last places able to provide educational materials for children and families. With remote education the new normal for pre-K through college students, bookstores and their employees—if they feel comfortable doing so—should be allowed to support distance learning with adapted business models, including virtual story times, online book groups, curbside pick-ups and deliveries, and more.

Bookstores also provide materials to entertain, educate, and connect individuals during this time of social distancing, which is even more essential after the extension of your important "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" directive. Book distributors remain open, so the supply chain is still functional—for the support of their communities and for their own economic health, Washington's bookstores need to be given permission to serve their customers to the best of their ability while following strict public-health guidelines.

Independent bookstores are economic and community engagement engines around the state. They employ hundreds of people and contribute to their communities through story times, author events, school book fairs, school visits, donations to charities, and more. But many of these bookstores may not weather the extended closure required of businesses

classified as “nonessential.” To lose these companies and the jobs they provide now, when the need for information and stories to connect us is greater than ever, would be a blow not only to Washington’s small-business economy but to our resiliency and creativity as a state.

Please consider classifying bookstores as essential businesses during this crisis and give them the ability to serve their communities the same way our restaurants, hardware stores, pharmacies, grocery stores, and other crucial businesses are currently doing. We don’t want to wait until it’s too late to find out how essential they truly are.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca Brinbury". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rebecca Brinbury
Board President and Cofounder
Seattle City of Literature
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