



**For Immediate Release**

Contact: Heather Hoell, 503.477.9648

[heather@ventureportland.org](mailto:heather@ventureportland.org)

**Proposed Business Tax Increase Concern  
Statement: Venture Portland Board of Directors**

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Venture Portland is the support system for Portland’s 50 unique neighborhood business districts. Together, our districts contain 19,200 businesses (98% of which have five or fewer employees) and provide 267,000 jobs. As business owners and business district leaders, we know that, in Portland, SMALL is really BIG. Which is why we are once again highly frustrated by Mayor Hales’ decision to announce a business tax increase without contacting us or providing adequate opportunity for our volunteer-run business associations to either take a position or meaningfully participate in the budget process.

As the driving force behind Portland’s economy, we know that small businesses create two out of every three new US jobs and locally have provided record-breaking revenue surpluses for the last two years. As committed partners to City Council, we expected to be included in conversations about a tax increase that would have a \$9 million impact on businesses. Following the recession, businesses have been asked to fund new employee benefits (Sick Leave), change hiring processes (Ban the Box, Removing Barriers to Employment), pay more taxes (TriMet Payroll Tax and Gas Tax) and significantly increase employee wages (Statewide Minimum Wage). Adding additional financial burden to small businesses should, at a minimum, require thoughtful public process and a commitment to fiscal responsibility, public safety and the provision of essential City services.

We applaud the proposed Owner’s Compensation Deduction increase to \$125,000. Venture Portland has pushed for this increase for almost a decade. We also applaud the Mayor’s goals to greatly reduce the lag time between hiring Police Officers and putting them on the street; the 50-officer force deficit and current 2-year hiring process has left our business districts woefully under-served. In addition, the lack of enforcement of the new ‘Safe Sleep’ policy has made our businesses and business districts vulnerable and greatly reduced the safety and livability of our neighborhoods.

We noted during the extensive debate over the proposed Portland Street Fund that transparency and accountability from our elected officials is critical for earning our trust and support. As City Council continues to work through this rapidly evolving budget process, we strongly encourage Mayor Hales and the other Commissioners to create a budget that adequately funds City priorities and supports neighborhood businesses and business districts.

[ventureportland.org](http://ventureportland.org)

503.477.9648 | 503.477.9641 fax

1125 SE Madison St, Suite 112 Portland, OR 97214