

Testimony in favor of the Main Street Bounceback program

AB 963 / SB 891

February 14, 2024

Assembly Committee on Tourism

Thank you for your time and consideration today.

By continuing the successful Main Street Bounceback program, we can move Wisconsin toward being a welcoming place where people can work, live, and thrive. Since this committee announced it would hold a public hearing on this legislation, my office has received a statewide surge of support for continuing this program.

In 2021, the Main Street Bounceback program provided more than 9,400 grants to help small businesses across all 72 counties in Wisconsin. These one-time grants were given to businesses seeking to initially occupy or further expand into vacant commercial space; this program has been a direct investment in the revitalization of communities across the state.

One investment helped a Monona business move out of a basement and into a storefront, increasing their visibility, capacity, and their impact on their community. Another investment helped a cottage bakery business return a fully licensed kitchen bakery to main street in Watertown, renewing a local tradition dating back to the 1930s. In Oshkosh and in Wyocena, there are a pair of businesses that were able to flourish because this grant program gave them the financial foundation to pursue their dreams after moving to Wisconsin to start businesses.

These investments have been life changing. They've helped people turn dreams into reality. And they've helped infuse life – economic and cultural life – into downtowns all across Wisconsin with vibrant businesses.

Wisconsin should be a place where people can take a chance on themselves – to found a business, to turn an idea into a company, to make the leap into entrepreneurship. This is personal for me, as a small business owner and entrepreneur myself. The Main Street Bounceback has helped innovators across the state succeed and grow. We have thousands of success stories in every county in the state.

This bill will provide \$25 million GPR annually to assist new or expanding businesses in moving into currently vacant commercial spaces. Specifically, these grants are intended to offset business costs related to opening a new location such as leases, mortgages, or operational expenses, and continue to build on a successful initial wave of investment.

Communities across Wisconsin are eager to build thriving downtowns, with new and expanding businesses. We can be a destination for people, who visit these vibrant communities around the state, fall in love with Wisconsin, and know our state is a place they can live, work, and thrive.



ALEX JOERS

WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE
79TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony of Rep. Alex Joers
Committee on Tourism: February 14, 2024
AB 963: main street bounceback grants and making an appropriation

Chairwoman Magnifici and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding this public hearing on Assembly Bill 963. As a co-author of this legislation, I appreciate the opportunity to testify in favor of this bill to support our local businesses here in Wisconsin.

Many of you may remember the stark headline back in 2017 that ranked Wisconsin dead last in small business start-up creation.¹ Since that time, we have made significant improvements to the small business climate in our state. One notable program that helped Wisconsin get back on track is the Main Street Bounceback Program.

Created by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) in 2021, the Main Street Bounceback Program has provided more than 9,400 grants, helping small businesses across all 72 counties in Wisconsin. These grants provide a direct investment into our communities, helping to bolster businesses that are looking to occupy or expand into vacant commercial space. The revitalization accomplished through this program has led to benefits in every corner of the state and many business owners have been appreciative of the financial support this program granted them to grow their businesses.

We hope to continue providing the benefits this program has brought to Wisconsin by forming a permanent Main Street Bounceback Program, which will provide \$25 million in grants each year through the WEDC. These grants will aid and encourage new or expanding businesses to occupy vacant commercial spaces in Wisconsin by offsetting costs acquired by opening a new location.

The Main Street Bounceback Program will ultimately aid in restoring business occupancy in currently underutilized storefronts, improving our local economies. This will also lead to improved odds of a business remaining open long-term. We need to continue to prioritize investment in our communities across the state by supporting our main streets and uplifting the local businesses that occupy these spaces.

¹ Published on *GOBankingRates*, Sep. 2017 "The Best and Worst States to Start a Business"
<https://www.gobankingrates.com/money/jobs/10-best-worst-states-entrepreneurs/>

Just this year, a report from WalletHub shows that Wisconsin's standing in small business creation is now much better, at 28th amongst the 50 states. Even better, Forbes lists Wisconsin as 17th for the best state to start a business. Of course, I think we all want Wisconsin to be number one, and that's why the Main Street Bounceback Program is crucial to continue.

Please join me in supporting AB 963.



Testimony of Sam Ridders – Deputy Secretary and COO,
Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation
Assembly Committee on Tourism
February 14, 2024

Good afternoon Chair Magnafici and members of the Assembly Committee on Tourism. My name is Sam Ridders and I am the Deputy Secretary and COO of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

I am here today to express WEDC's support for Assembly Bill 963, which would establish a \$25 million appropriation in each year of the FY 23-25 biennium to fund a program similar to the Main Street Bounceback grants that WEDC offered in 2021-22.

As you may recall, Governor Evers established the Main Street Bounceback grants in April 2021 with \$50 million of federal ARPA funds. The goal – which many considered ambitious at the time – was to provide 5,000 businesses and nonprofits with \$10,000 grants to move into previously vacant commercial spaces.

WEDC partnered with regional planning commissions and other economic development organizations around the state to administer the grants locally, which streamlined the application process and made it easier to get the funds into the hands of local business owners.

I believe it is fair to say that none of us associated with the program could have predicted its popularity and the demand for these funds. By May 2022, WEDC and the governor's office determined that the number of pending applications for grants exceeded the budgeted funds, and Governor Evers provided an additional \$25 million. In September 2022, the governor provided yet another \$25 million, raising total funding for the project to \$100 million.

When the Main Street Bounceback program ended on December 31, 2022, nearly 9,500 businesses and nonprofits in all 72 counties had received the grants. Gaining so many new small businesses in less than two years is impressive enough. But what made these grants truly unique is the impact they have had on communities and on the business owners—and the lessons WEDC learned in making these investments.

From Washburn on Lake Superior to Prairie du Chien along the Mississippi River and all points in between, local leaders have told us these grants brought renewed excitement to their downtowns by filling in the gaps between stores, encouraging people to linger, shop, dine, and spend money in their own communities.

For the business owners, the grants provided that last little boost that allowed them to realize a long-held dream. One of our favorite success stories at WEDC about the program involves Monica Lara and her jewelry store, Argentum et Aurum in Fond du Lac.

LOOK FORWARD ➤

Although she was trained as a marine biologist, Monica had always had an interest in making jewelry. When she moved to Wisconsin in late 2021, she decided to make her dream a reality and opened her store a few months later.

Since she opened her store, Monica's success has multiplied. First, she expanded her business into an even bigger space. Then she bought the building where her business is located and is now renting out the upper floors, providing downtown housing for the community.

There are many stories like Monica's, and we at WEDC have seen what businesses like hers mean to a community. You will likely be hearing more of them today. Each of these businesses represents the fulfillment of a dream, as well as an opportunity to create more jobs, establish new business connections, and make every community a little more attractive and welcoming.

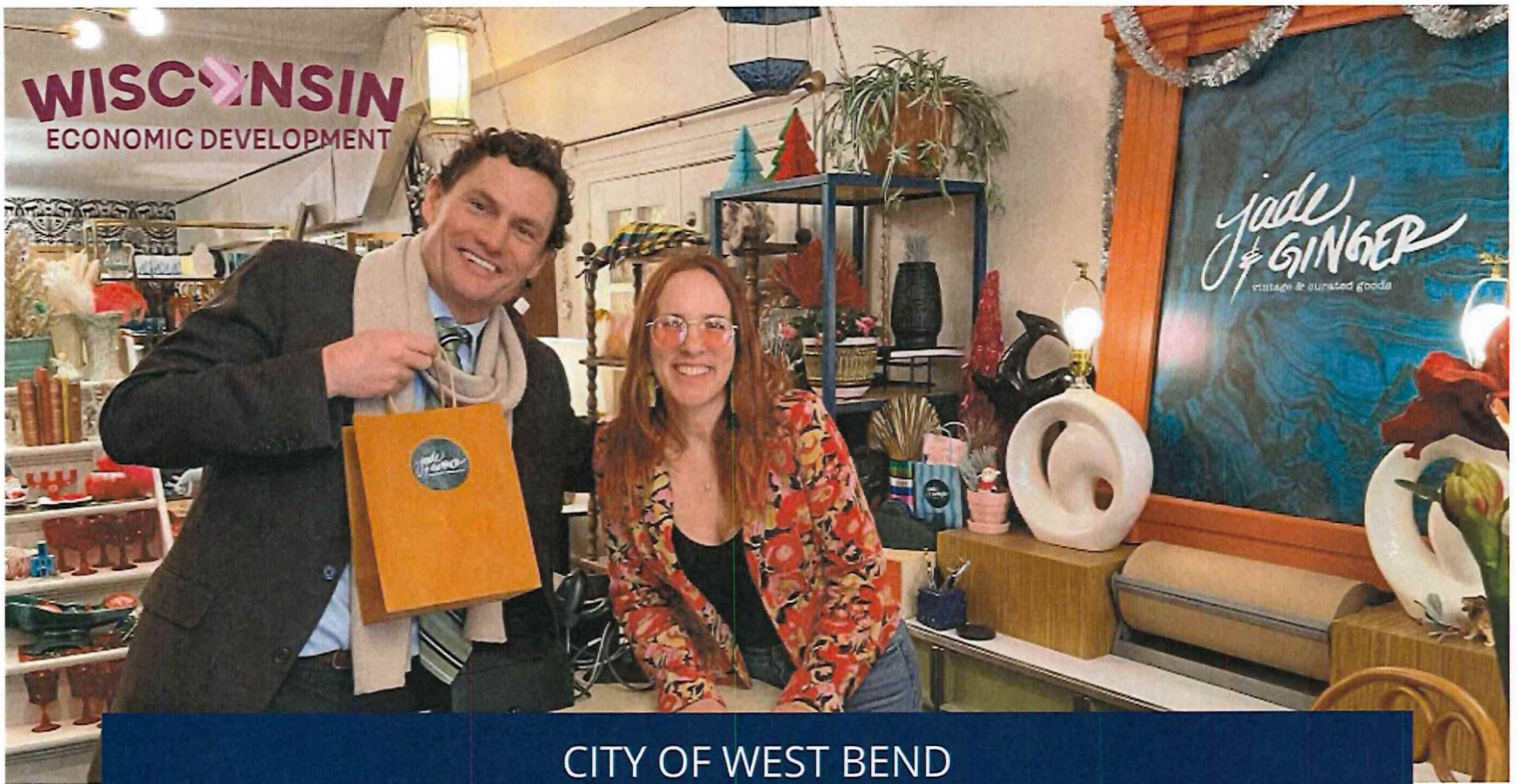
One unexpected result of the Bounceback grant program was that more than half of the grants ended up going to women-owned businesses—and over one-third of the grants went to businesses in rural communities. From these results, we have at WEDC learned that when resources are available, entrepreneurs in every part of our state are ready to jump in and succeed.

Another key lesson from the program is how important it is to invest in all our communities. A recent survey found Wisconsin ranked first in the nation in the share of federal recovery funds allocated to business and second in the share dedicated to economic development. Many of these funds went directly to small businesses, often in relatively small amounts.

What we discovered from the success of the Bounceback Grants is that you don't have to spend big to show big results. That's because, as one store owner told me, "Small businesses know how to stretch a dollar."

WEDC has committed to building on these successes with our community-based businesses. Last year, WEDC partnered with our state's Small Business Development Centers to provide targeted assistance to MSBB recipients. We plan to expand the program to more small businesses – including those who were not grant recipients – later this year.

I want to thank the committee for holding today's hearing. We ask that you support AB 963, and I welcome your questions.



CITY OF WEST BEND
**WI Tomorrow Main Street
Bounceback Grant Program Impact Report**

87

West Bend
Businesses Awarded

\$870,000

Infused into Local
Business Community

72 of 87

Remain Open
for Business

46/87

New
Businesses

41/87

Expanded
Businesses

27

Businesses would
not have started
without the grant.

97%

Reported the
application
process was easy.

39

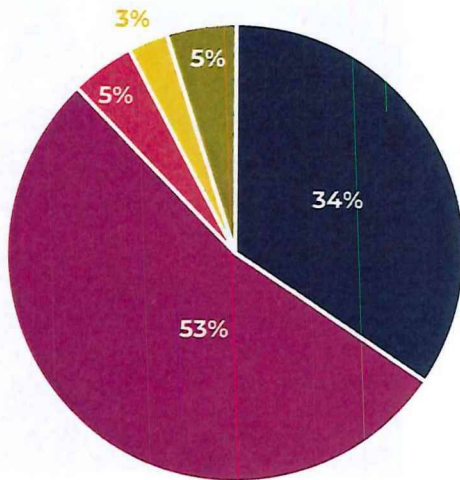
Businesses have
grown their staff
since the grant.

Supporting small businesses creates vibrant communities.

A \$10,000 grant can be the spark (and security) needed for an entrepreneur to turn a dream into a thriving business.

MAIN STREET BOUNCEBACK HIGHLIGHTS

DEMOGRAPHICS OF APPLICATIONS FUNDED



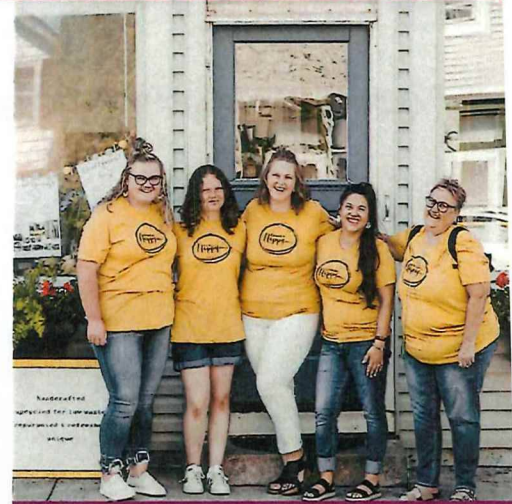
Minority-Owned:
3,453 36.6%

Woman-Owned:
5,352 56.8%

Veteran-Owned:
454 4.8%

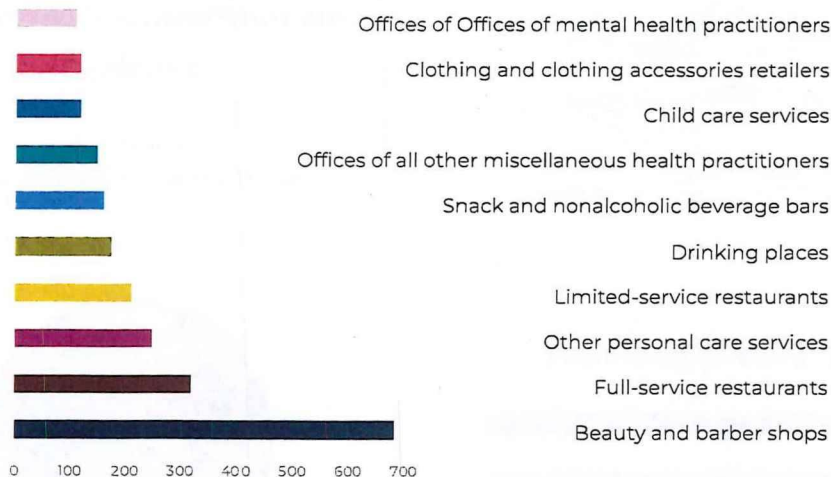
Disabled-Owned:
280 3.0%

LGBTQ-Owned:
493 5.2%



It's the perfect match. Kelly's shop, Create Happy, transforms used materials into jewelry.

THE TOP TEN INDUSTRIES



Only 2,268 businesses are included in this breakdown. These are the businesses that listed a NAICS code that was one of the ten most frequently entered on applications.

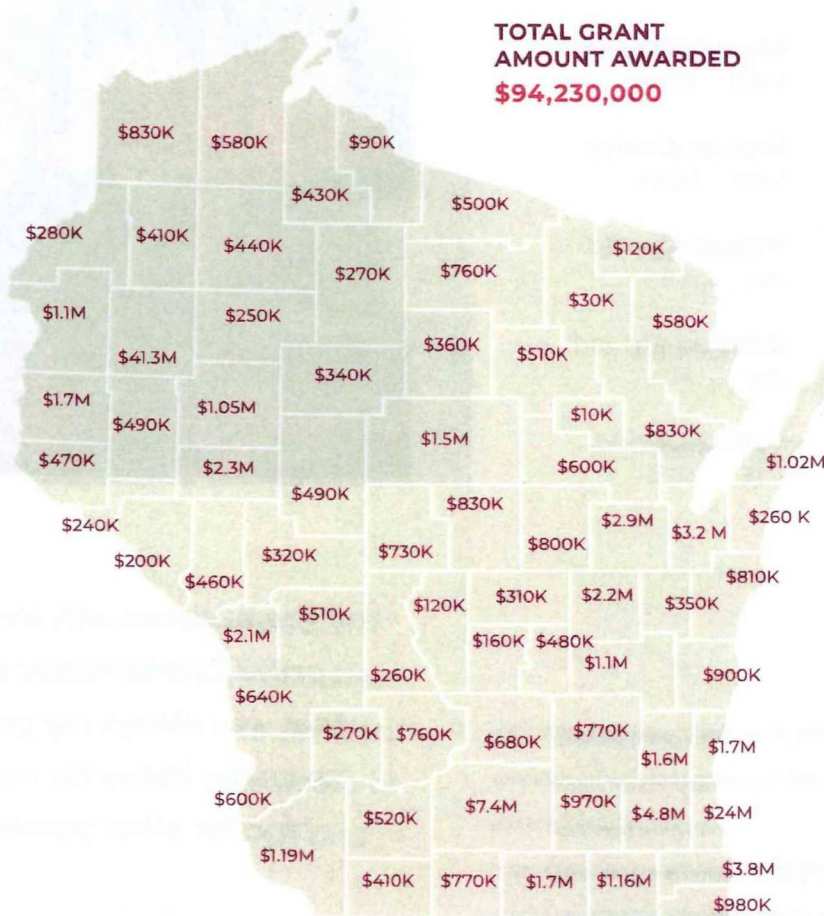
“The business was always called Create Happy and that was always my goal — to create happy for myself and for other people.”

Kelly Gardner
Main Street Bounceback Recipient



MAIN STREET BOUNCEBACK HIGHLIGHTS

INVESTMENTS BY COUNTY



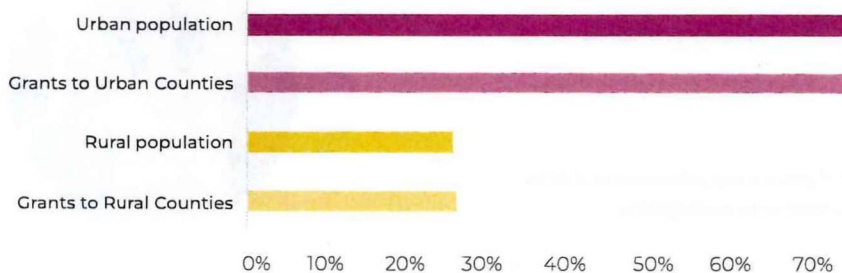
Joan and Richard Neeno opened their second restaurant—Sandwich Bar—with support from a Main Street Bounceback Grant.

“It gave me the ability to not just dream about opening my business, but to make it a reality.”

Heidi Pflanzler

Main Street Bounceback Recipient

PERCENT OF GRANTS BY POPULATION





DEVELOPMENT, INC.

WORKING HARD TO MAKE LIVING EASY

February 13, 2024

Dear Senator Roys and Representative Joers:

On behalf of Driftless Development, Inc., I am writing in support of Wisconsin AB 963 / SB 891. These assembly / senate bills are extremely important for Wisconsin, especially the rural counties.

Driftless Development, Inc., Crawford County Economic Development Organization, is working very hard to increase the economic vitality of all of Crawford County and improve the quality of life for those that live and work here. This is not possible without a thriving business community.

It goes without saying that funding that will be provided via these bills is especially crucial in rural areas where establishing new retail opportunities is tough. As new development opportunities arise, this funding will allow us to tackle these challenges and reap the economic benefit in a variety of ways. It will create more jobs, provide new products and services, generate tax revenue, and keep money local, to just name a few. When we invest in our local communities, everyone wins.

Crawford County had the opportunity to benefit from the recent Bounceback Grant funding. Driftless Development, Inc. assisted more than 60 small start-up or expanding businesses. The \$600,000 that these grants brought into our county had an immediate economic impact of almost \$1 million.

This letter of support also includes the Prairie du Chien Main Street Program and Gays Mills Connect Communities - programs under the Driftless Development, Inc. umbrella. Both Main Street and Connect Communities strive to grow our business and other retail districts throughout the county. To that end, the Bounceback funding will allow us to promote and grow new retail opportunities in the underutilized spaces and support expanding ones. Economic growth requires a strong commitment to rural regions of our state so that we can realize our true potential and become thriving communities that benefit everyone who live and work here.

Wisconsin AB 963 / SB 891 is a step in the right direction. It is for these reasons that Driftless Development, Inc. encourages you to support making the Bounceback Grant a permanent program.

Sincerely,

Sasha Dull
President, Board of Directors
Driftless Development, Inc.

700 East Blackhawk Avenue, Suite 28, Prairie du Chien, WI 53821

www.driftlessdevelopment.org

info@driftlessdevelopment.org

www.facebook.com/DriftlessDevelopment



February 13, 2024

Kelda Helen Roys
Wisconsin State Senator
130S in the State Capitol
2 E Main St.
Madison, WI 53702

Alex Joers
Wisconsin State Representative
Capitol Office Number: 20 North
PO Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Re: Letter of Support for the Mainstreet Bounceback Program/Grant

Dear State Senator Roys and State Representative Joers:

I am writing this letter to fully support the Mainstreet Bounceback Program/Grant as my small business – Vang Enterprises LLC was a recipient of the grant in 2020, and my business would not have made it without the grant/support from the State of Wisconsin and the grant. Thank you for awarding my business a grant.

The Mainstreet Bounceback Program/Grant was essential in my business being able to relocate from my home office to a small office suite that qualified under the grant's requirements. I am so thankful for the grant, even though it was only \$10,000 for one year, those funds contributed greatly the sustainability of my business today. The COVID-19 pandemic hit the small business sector very hard, and I am no exception as many business requests dried up quickly. Vang Enterprises LLC is a small business consulting/management company focused on assisting sole proprietors and small businesses with their business needs.

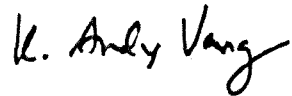
The State of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Legislature needs to continue the Mainstreet Bounceback Program/Grant to support existing grant recipients and/or assist new recipients to help sustain the local economies in Wisconsin, whether that business is from La Crosse, like my business, or a business in Milwaukee. The grant works and is still needed so please consider extending the grant for another grant cycle or a couple of more years.

Vang Enterprises LLC and I fully support the Mainstreet Bounceback Program/Grant and am requesting that our state senators & representatives also support the grant as well. Please do not abandon your small business owners, like myself, in the wake of the post-Covid 19 pandemic times.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding this matter, please feel free to email me at vangenterprisesllc@gmail.com or call me at **(608) 385-7427 (cell)**.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and support with the Mainstreet Bounceback Program/Grant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Andy Vang". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

K. Andy Vang
Owner

Synapse Solutions

111 North Main Street, Suite 100 Janesville, WI 53545
Phone: 608-580-0031 Fax: 608-580-0038

February 12, 2024

Dear members of the committee,

We, at Synapse Solutions, a neuropsychological evaluation and counseling practice, wholeheartedly support Assembly Bill 963 and Senate Bill 891, the Wisconsin Tomorrow Main Street Bounceback Grant program. This program played a pivotal role in our successful launch in December 2022, enabling us to offer much-needed mental health services to the Janesville community.

Synapse Solutions was founded to address an urgent need. Prior to its establishment, residents faced extensive waits for mental health services. Therapy wait times could stretch for months, while neuropsychological evaluation wait times in Rock and Dane County alone were over a year. Despite ongoing challenges with waitlists, we take pride in our efforts to reduce wait times and expand mental health services

The Main Street Bounceback Grant program provided us with the essential seed money needed to establish our practice. This vital funding facilitated us in setting up our facility and acquiring equipment. Consequently, we were able to open our doors and immediately begin serving the community.

Our impact has been substantial:

- **Employment:** We proudly created 11 new jobs, contributing to the local economy and providing valuable professional opportunities.
- **Client Reach:** In just a year, over 1,000 individuals of all ages, ranging from **5 to their 80s**, have registered with Synapse Solutions, demonstrating the immense need for our services. We serve a **broad patient population**, our clientele spans across 14 counties including Rock, Green, Dane, Jefferson, Walworth, Waukesha, Milwaukee, Racine, Grant, Sauk, Columbia, Marquette, Waushara and even Marathon.
- **Reduced Wait Times:** We've reduced wait times for therapy and neuropsychological evaluations, making these critical services more accessible to the community.

Mental Health and Economic Prosperity:

Investing in mental health services isn't merely a social good; it's an economic imperative. Studies have shown a direct correlation between untreated mental health

issues and decreased productivity, higher healthcare costs, and increased reliance on social services. Conversely, accessible mental health care leads to healthier, happier individuals, a more productive workforce, and a thriving community.

Neuropsychological Testing: Building Futures.

Neuropsychological evaluations go beyond diagnosis. They identify cognitive strengths and weaknesses, providing crucial information for developing personalized treatment plans, educational interventions, and career guidance. Early and accurate evaluation empowers individuals to reach their full potential, contributing positively to their personal and professional lives.

A Call to Action:

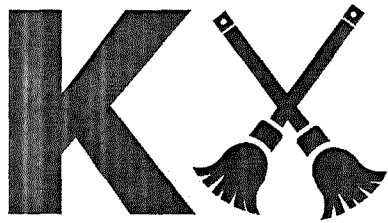
We urge you to join us in supporting AB 963/SB 891. This program provides vital support to new businesses, creates jobs, and strengthens our community by addressing the critical need for accessible mental health services. By investing in programs like Main Street Bounceback, we invest in the well-being of our residents, the strength of our workforce, and the future of Wisconsin.

Together, let's build a healthier, happier, and more prosperous Wisconsin, one step at a time.

Sincerely,

Georgien Dudzek, Psy.D.

And The Team at Synapse Solutions



KX Cleaning Service LLC
SMALL BUSINESS & RESIDENTIAL CLEANING

February 13, 2024

Kelda Helen Roys
Wisconsin State Senator
130S in the State Capitol
2 E Main St.
Madison, WI 53702

Alex Joers
Wisconsin State Representative
Capitol Office Number: 20 North
PO Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

Re: Letter of Support for the Mainstreet Bounceback Program/Grant

Dear State Senator Roys and State Representative Joers:

I am writing this letter to fully support the Mainstreet Bounceback Program/Grant as my small business – KX Cleaning Service LLC was a recipient of the grant in 2020, and my business would not have made it without the grant/support from the State of Wisconsin and the grant. Thank you so much for awarding my business a grant.

The Mainstreet Bounceback Program/Grant was essential in my business being able to relocate from my home office to a small office suite that qualified under the grant's requirements. I am so thankful for the grant as those funds contributed greatly the sustainability of my business today.

The State of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Legislature needs to continue the Mainstreet Bounceback Program/Grant to support existing grant recipients and/or assist new recipients to help sustain the local economies in Wisconsin. The grant works and is still needed so please consider extending the grant for another grant cycle or a couple of more years.

KX Cleaning Service LLC and I fully support the Mainstreet Bounceback Program/Grant and am requesting that our state senators & representatives also support the grant as well. Please do not abandon your small business owners, like myself, in the wake of the post-Covid 19 pandemic times.

If there are any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at kxcleaningservice@gmail.com or call me at **(608) 769-2275 (cell)**.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ka Xiong', written in a cursive style.

Ka Xiong
Owner

February 14, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Ringhand's Beer Mustard
Evansville

Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of this exceptional program. I applied for and received a Grant in February of 2023. I received \$10,000.00 which could be used at my discretion to purchase operating supplies, equipment, ingredients, utilities, rent and remodeling expenses.

I qualified for this Grant because I rented a vacant store front that had been empty since COVID in 2020. My business has been in existence since 2011, but on a small scale using a shared kitchen. During COVID my business grew because more people were eating at home and cooking with locally sourced products. It also became more difficult to get ingredients and bottling supplies due to supply chain issues. I found that I needed to order twice the product that I normally did in order to have what I needed when I needed it. That cost added up as well since I was sitting on inventory.

One of my major purchases was a bottle filling machine and the equipment needed to run it, a large air compressor and work tables. I was able to increase my production from hand filling 25 bottles in 20 minutes to 75 bottles in 8 minutes! This allowed me to increase my sales capacity which I did, increasing sales by 25% in 2023. Having the storage space in my rental unit allowed me to do more timely purchasing, production space that could accommodate more workers and better working conditions in general.

Operating a small business in a small community is challenging and this Grant gives you the extra lift you need to get up and running with the equipment you need. I believe by continuing this program more small businesses will be able to succeed! Please give this bill serious consideration.

Sincerely,

Senator Janis Ringhand, Retired

Janis Ringhand
d/b/a Ringhand's Beer Mustard
25 W. Main St., Ste 1
Evansville, WI 53536

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

ArrowStarPhotography
Madison

I am writing in support of AB 963/SB 891. As a small business owner, it was an incredible honor to receive a \$10,000 grant from Madison Region Economic Partnership in the form of the Main Street Bounceback Grant. I was able to utilize an empty storefront for my photography studio, and with the funds received I paid six month's rent, I put in desperately needed new flooring, added a fresh coat of paint, and I was able to purchase new equipment and furnishings in order to serve my clients at the highest level. In my space I have been able to serve as host for the first season of the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce's podcast, I have photographed several CEOs of large organizations around Madison, and I have hosted two fundraisers (the third is underway) where I was able to donate \$8000 to local organizations. Without the grant I would neither have been able to pay a half a year's rent nor create a beautiful and welcoming space without financial hardship. I hope this program continues so other small business owners have the same opportunity as I did.

Thank you for your time!
Love and Light,



Shalicia Johnson
Founder & CEO

+608-285-2636
Shalicia@ArrowStarPhotography.com
www.ArrowStarPhotography.com
6380B Coops Ave. Monona, WI 53716

City of Madison MBE, WBE, SBE
Dane County MBE, WBE, ESBE
State of Wisconsin MBE
BBB Accredited

Please consider the environment before printing this email

Testimony submitted via email to Rep. Alex Joers and Sen. Kelda Roys, co-authors of AB 963 / SB 891.

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

5BAR
Beloit, WI

Thank you SO much. The grant I received kept me in business. Shortly after receiving the funds I was hit with many surprise bills that were in the \$17,000 range. Water main to my building broke, HVAC system, along with the extra labor to fix and clean, plus not being open at all during that time. Without the grant I may have closed my doors for good. The timing was unreal, such great timing.

Thank you,

Levi Andersen

5BAR: 530 E Grand Ave, Beloit WI

Divebar-Chic: www.5BAR.co | Instagram: @5BAR.co

1906 Eventspace: www.TheCastleBeloit.com | Instagram: TheGoldenHourBeloit

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Stromberg Wei LLC dba Adi's Chinese Food
Wisconsin Dells

Hello, I am Michael Stromberg, co-owner of Stromberg Wei LLC dba Adi's Chinese Food. We opened this restaurant in an unoccupied building in the Wisconsin Dells area during tough times due to Covid and rapidly rising costs. We were very fortunate to get a nice grant through Main Street Bounceback that helped to strengthen and build this business which led to a successful small business to help the community as well as giving locals and tourists a good option for food as other small businesses were continuing to close.

In addition, Main Street Bounceback has helped with an abundance of information for small businesses as well as many helpful programs.

I feel the Main Street Bounceback program is very necessary to support small businesses and help bring back storefronts that are dwindling.

Thank you for your attention to this needed program.

Michael Stromberg
608-844-9850

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

The Hearing Place
Janesville

The Bounceback grant was a tremendous help as we started our business in Wisconsin. Having the funds to support a brick and mortar location gave our clients confidence in the legitimacy of our company which allowed us to grow faster than we anticipated. We look forward to continued growth in Wisconsin in the foreseeable future.

Please let me know if there are any specific questions you have for me.

Kind regards,

Cyndie

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

D&K Foods

Waupun

Kyle Rowe

D&K Foods LLC

7 Deer Path Ct.

Waupun, WI 53963

608-320-4580

Testimony in support of the Main Street Bounce Back Program To whom it may concern, We are in support of continuing the program for the State of Wisconsin. We are a recipient of the program twice since its inception. The locations we went into were vacant, and now have new shiny Jersey Mike's Subs instead of dusty old spaces.

The real estate market is getting more expensive each year, lack of landlord tenant improvement allowances and spaces requiring extra demolition drive costs of development up and can play a factor in the choice to lease the space or not. We used the grant in our Beaver Dam location (106 Frances Lane) to offset the cost of demo and removal of the previous tenants floor tile and demising walls. In turn this grant helped make our decision to invest in the City of Beaver Dam. This brought 20 new jobs and over a million dollars of taxable revenue to the city/state.

By continuing this program, it will help us pursue vacant retail sites in the future.

Sincerely,

Kyle Rowe

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

2 Blondes LLC
Oshkosh

Hi,

I wanted to say we support the mainstreet bounce back program. AB 963/SB 891.

We received this grant during covid as that was when the space became available. It allowed us to expand, create an opening between and purchase stock. Since the expansion our business has increased tremendously which has resulted in our best year ever this past year. The grant allowed us to take away a bit of the stress with growing our business.

Thank you,

Tamara Russell
2 Blondes LLC
461 N Main St.
Oshkosh WI 54901
920-527-9975
colormeblonde7@outlook.com

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Midwest Digital Ninjas
Oshkosh

I Support this bill as it has helped me and many other business owners open up storefronts and eliminate many of the vacant spaces in our internal shopping areas in our community.

I highly recommend it.

Thank you,
JB Thompson
Midwest Digital Ninjas

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Fusion Footwear
Oshkosh

Fusion Footwear in Oshkosh, Wisconsin supports this continued program! As a small family business in Wisconsin, this grant was beneficial for the start up and continued outreach we are able to do in our community. We used the money to invest in signage, marketing and a "Kicks for Kids" program ensuring we put shoes on kids feet in our community that may not be able to afford it. It is almost like the program comes back full circle, as we are investing back into the future through shoes! THANK YOU!

Kind Regards,

Stephanie Pereira da Silva

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Hotel Fortney
Viroqua

Please accept this email as my support for AB 963/SB 891.

On January 2, 2020, my son and his wife and my husband and I purchased the Fortney Building, which sits prominently on the corner of Court and Main Streets in Viroqua, WI. The building was in severe disrepair and was crumbling before our eyes. We were fully aware of the cost and the time and energy needed to bring this building back to life. But in our view, this building had great potential and we simply had to move forward with this project.

When we purchased this three-story building, long-term residential/transient housing comprised floors two and three. There was only one storefront on the first floor. The remainder of the first floor was empty and neglected.

Our first effort was to repair and remodel the first floor to create six business spaces. This took us approximately 14 months to complete. A few months into our project, we already had 6 committed business owners (4 new businesses and two existing area businesses) ready to take the commercial spaces. By the time our first-floor project was complete, we had a waiting list of business entrepreneurs interested in space when it became available.

In April of 2021, we were ready to open the commercial business areas. One of the six businesses became our own, as we opened the Historic Fortney Lounge. We received a Main Street Bounceback Grant as we opened this particular business. It came at the perfect time. We had already endured a great amount of repair and renovation costs. The Main Street Bounceback grant allowed us to purchase some of those "odds and ends" - the things you least expect you need - when taking empty/neglected space and turning it into a thriving business.

Several of the business owners who began their tenure with us in 2021, also applied for and received the grant funding. They too, had significant costs associated in opening their businesses and I know that they appreciated the financial help received.

The entire first floor of our building, which is about the span of half a city block, went from vacant (with the exception of a 300 square foot leased area) to thriving.

Three years later and I am happy to report that we still have four of the initial six businesses in our building. One business owner closed her business for health reasons and the second business owner moved because she needed more space. Her business thrived so well that she outgrew what we had available for her. Their two spaces were filled immediately.

On a side note: In the spring of 2022, we were honored to receive the Chamber Mainstreet Award for Historic Restoration for the work done on the first floor of this building. With the help of a Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and a Community Development Investment Grant, floors two and three eventually became Hotel Fortney, which opened for business in the spring of 2023.

All of the financial assistance we received helped us change a once crumbling building into an award-winning space housing six thriving businesses. The Mainstreet Bounceback Grant provides that little extra boost needed and support for this bill should receive great consideration.

Sincerely,

Sue Wrobel
Hotel Fortney
100 Main Street
Viroqua, WI 54665

Testimony submitted via email to Rep. Alex Joers and Sen. Kelda Roys, co-authors of AB 963 / SB 891.

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Table Wine

Madison

Thank you for sponsoring the bills to turn the Main Street Bounceback Program into a permanent program. I am hopeful that my enclosed statement, along with those of other supporters throughout the state, will help this transformation become a reality.

In 2022, I bought a building here in Madison for my wine shop. We had been renting for years and wanted to provide a permanent home for ourselves where the rent didn't increase drastically year after year. The 1900s building we bought was in poor condition with dangerously outdated electrical and plumbing, and we knew we had quite the endeavor ahead of us. Over the course of that summer, our costs kept going up as the renovation project grew. We were running out of money from our SBA loan and personal funds as the cost of drywall, basic flooring, and other building supplies more than doubled. When I learned about the Main Street Bounceback Program, I started crying out of sheer relief. Here was a program made exactly for people like me, people who are trying to improve the neighborhoods in which we live and work. The seemingly simple act of restoration that was supposed to cost \$50,000 ended up over \$100,000. We wouldn't have our beautiful store without the Bounceback Program. Instead of a rundown building that people overlooked for decades, our place is now referred to as a "jewel box" by our neighbors who marvel at our storefront.

This program gives people the opportunities to restore, beautify, and upgrade buildings throughout our state. What a tremendous opportunity you have to breathe life into Wisconsin towns and cities, and I only hope that you truly understand what it means to support small businesses by voting yes on AB 963/SB 891.

Thank you for your time,

Molly Moran

Molly Moran, owner (she/hers)

Table Wine

2301 Atwood Ave

Madison, WI 53704

608.609.9092

12-6 Sun, 12-8 Mon-Tues, 12-9 Wed-Sat

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

KeenWorks, LLC
Amery

KeenWorks, LLC owes you two a big *THANK YOU!* for the Mainstreet Bounceback Grant Program. We benefited from the program you authored. Others should be so fortunate. With the assistance of the grant, KeenWorks, LLC was able to expand our presence in central and SE Wisconsin and invest in marketing collateral. We finished 2023 with a contract >\$1M. Simply put, the Mainstreet Bounceback Grant Program was helpful to us as we endeavor to *Make Wisconsin Better*. As a prior applicant with growth potential, we remain interested in the program for ourselves and others as we seek to expand. We support AB 963/SB 891 because of the leg-up it gave our startup and the benefits we continue to accrue from the advantages that materialized from the grant.

We are unable to attend the hearing to share our support.

Thank you.

Kind regards,

Doug

Douglas B Johnson
Principal Provocateur
KeenWorks, LLC
774 North Bend
Amery, WI 54001

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Stroupe's Hilltop Inn
Whitewater

Since I received my Main Street Bounceback program grant two years ago, I've been wondering who I could thank for this amazing opportunity. I now know.

Of course I reached out to the Bounceback program representatives but I thought there was more thanking to be done. The grant I received was not only a huge shot in the arm financially, it was also a boost to my confidence that other people believed in what I was doing. I don't think I would have continued to pursue my goal had it not been for the grant and show of support.

We are yet to open but you cannot believe the progress we've made! I've changed zoning, had a certified survey map prepared, had an architect render drawings, and am now seeking a building permit. Every step along the way is a process - and often a long process - but I see the light at the end of the tunnel. When that light finally shines with all its intensity, I truly believe I will have a business that adds to the community and will be a place where families come together to enjoy a wholesome Saturday morning or a fun Saturday night. I simply cannot wait.

I thank everyone involved. Everyone. We're taking a ram shackled piece of Whitewater and Jefferson County history and restoring it to greatness. Please visit once we're opened, which should be later in 2024. I'll be so happy to see you. There is much to be proud of.

With great appreciation,

Kathy Doering-Kilkenny
Owner, Stroupe's Hilltop Inn

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Kundert's Main St. Market
Blanchardville

I received a bounce back grant a few years ago. It has completely changed our community .

The grant was for an empty grocery store. The store was sitting empty for over 2 years. So that 10k grant I received benefited 800 + people . We are no longer a food desert as before it was a 20 mile or more drive to reach a grocery store. With a lot of volunteers helping with the remodel the money was stretched to help purchase the new software and equipment to help my store run at profit. We also now employ over 10 people of all different ages. Our small town grocery store accepts WIC and SNAP programs which are the hardest hit people when it comes to food insecurities. My staff are great volunteers within the community .

This bounce back program is perfect for small towns that are constantly fitting with big box stores and chain stores. Please consider renewing this bill . We had great success with our grant and appreciate it today

Sincerely,

Diana Kaiser
Kunderts Main St. Market
Blanchardville, Wi

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Copper Ridge Dog Training LLC
Madison

I want to state my full support of AB 963/SB 891.

My business was a recipient of the Main Street Bounceback grant at the very end of 2022. I own Copper Ridge Dog Training LLC, a small, woman-owned local business in Madison, WI that began in March of 2020 after years of planning and preparation. The pandemic threw a big curveball my way, so I started the business in my basement with just 300 square feet of training space. We grew well, but I simply did not have the space to grow any more than I already had; we were stagnant and maxed out in my basement.

The grant gave me the financial ability to rent a new training space for my business. The space was 2,300 square feet, and had been vacant for more than two years. It needed a lot of construction and cleaning. The entire grant went towards renovation costs, which were required up-front in order to pay the contractors. Without those funds, I would not have been able to pay for rent, utilities, and payroll on top of those costs with that expansion. It gave me the confidence that I needed to make that leap, knowing that I wasn't stretching my bank account too thin.

Since that initial expansion into our facility, we have grown so much! We have already doubled our square footage within the past twelve months, now also renting the upstairs unit for a total of 4,500 square feet. We have hired two new people onto our team, and we are in the process of hiring our fifth team member! We trained nearly 70 new families and their dogs last year, go on monthly outings to support local stores and dog-friendly patios, and support countless local organizations including PAWWS, the Monona Police Department K9 unit, and local therapy dog programs. We continue to increase our sales every month and surpassed our annual income goals by \$50,000 last year alone!

All of this was made possible because we received a boost. A financial boost, a confidence boost, and now an educational boost with their ongoing programs to continue supporting me and my team in becoming more effective in our day-to-day responsibilities.

I am so thankful for this program. It has allowed me the opportunity to grow my business from a little dream in our basement to something that I had always hoped for, but didn't know that I could ever achieve. We are creating new jobs, helping more families and their dogs, and in all honesty, having so much fun along the way.

Please continue this program so that other business owners and dreamers can be given the same boost that we were. There are so many people that are hard working and driven that could do so much good if given this opportunity.

Please reach out if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,
Allison Stoffel, owner
www.copperridgetraining.com | 608-561-3314

Testimony submitted via email to Rep. Alex Joers and Sen. Kelda Roys, co-authors of AB 963 / SB 891.

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

The Philomathy School
Monona

Members of the Committee:

I am writing in favor of the bill to extend the Main Street Bounceback Program. I am the owner and operator of a math tutoring business in Monona. I specialize in occupational therapy-based education for students who need extra support in math. I am a woman business owner and first time business owner. I would not have been able to take the leap into this business without the support of the Main Street Bounceback program. It helped me cover start-up costs for a studio space and educational materials. I want the same opportunity to be extended to other potential business owners in Wisconsin who have a great idea and can add a lot to our economy and community, and just need the extra support that this program provides. I urge you to continue this program indefinitely.

Thank you,
Melanie Robak
Owner & Founder
The Philomathy School
6033 Monona Dr, Ste 204 Monona, WI 53716
858-220-1733
melanie@philomathyschool.org philomathyschool.org

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

The Taqueria
Oshkosh

Honorable Senators:

Thank you for your time. My name is Elie Saad. My family and I opened a small business in Oshkosh, Wisconsin in June 2022 - a restaurant. It has been challenging.

We chased our dream right into COVID. Nevertheless, we made refried beans out of beans (or lemonade out of lemons) and carried on. Never had I been so stressed. Why? You guessed it: money. Everything was more expensive. Supplies. Food. Staffing. We didn't think we'd open. Well, now I am telling you how grateful we are for having benefited from our local Mainstreet Bounceback Program. I couldn't believe it. An application. A few contacts in my community. A plan. A helping hand. \$10k. Yes!

The \$10k was gone minutes after I cashed the check. Honestly, I wish there was another zero at the end. But I was grateful. One, or two, or three bills I no longer had to worry about. Relief.

We aren't from here. We are from California. We chose this beautiful state of Wisconsin due to its people and its opportunity. It has been a year and a since we opened our taqueria (we serve Mexican street food in a fast-casual atmosphere), and it has been full of surprises. Regardless, we continue to persevere and taste bits of success, but we need every bit of help along the way. Come see us and get a sense of this program's incredible impact.

On behalf of all Wisconsin small business owners staring uncertainty right in the face, we'd appreciate you considering voting in favor of AB 963/SB 891.

Should you have any questions, contact me.

Best,

Elie Saad, Owner
The Taqueria
1838 Oshkosh Ave
Oshkosh, WI 54902
elie@taco123.com

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Provisions Health
Durand

I am writing in support of the Main Street Bounceback Program.

Provisions Health received a Bounceback grant and utilized it to grow into a new rural community where healthcare services were in decline, but yet needed. If we would not have received this grant this community would be with limited access to healthcare services. Since growing into this new location, we have saved veterans a lot of extra miles of commuting for services as well as community members. We have assisted the school district with sports physicals and donated money back to the athletic department and provided new jobs in the community. It has been a blessing for us to have the opportunity for this growth.

Gwen Sweeney
715-495-0898
<http://www.provisions.health>

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Farwell Gallery
McFarland, WI

My name is Kristin Ellis and I am the owner of the Farwell Gallery, a small gallery located in McFarland. Unfortunately, I am unable to testify in person - please read my testimony during the hearing. Our gallery started in 2021 with around 40 artists - we have grown to close to 100 artists many of whom are from Wisconsin. Many of our artists are minorities and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Our gallery offers several art workshops throughout the month including some that are discounted for the senior population. We have also done workshops for adults with developmental disabilities and for children. Our gallery is very active in the community - we sponsor many events and offer free activities for people of all ages and abilities. Most recently, we sponsored a snowman building competition which received over 80 entries from McFarland and other areas in the metro area. This activity was free and people in our community had a lot of fun participating. I am always looking for ways to promote creativity and the arts in our community. Our gallery provides income for many Wisconsin artists and provides affordable arts and crafts for people in our community. We have had people travel from Steven's Point, Fond du Lac, and Milwaukee to attend our classes.

I was one of the recipients of the Bounce Back Grant which helped us tremendously when we first opened. Opening a business is expensive and anything that can be done to help small business owners to start their dream on the front end is necessary.

For a lot of small businesses owners like myself, the option of traditional financing is not only expensive but hard to come by. As you know, a lot of small businesses fail within the first couple of years of opening their doors. By having access to grant funding - businesses are more likely to survive. Our business opened in November of 2021 - we experienced a lot of delays in opening due to construction and supply chain delays. The first couple of months after we opened were successful. However, our business was sluggish in the first and second quarter of 2022 - as is typical of most businesses in the retail space. When looking into funding our business - most banks charge incredibly high interest rates - making loans too expensive. A lot of small businesses, like mine, need a fairly small amount of funds whereas banks would only lend upwards of \$100,000.00. Having the bounce back grant allowed us to pay our bills while we were getting started. By having the extra capital, we were able to pay our bills and use the revenue coming in during those first six months for other necessary expenses like marketing, advertising, and the purchase of some inventory for our space.

Please continue offering the Bounceback Program for for businesses going forward. By investing in our business, you truly invested in our community. Small businesses are what our country really started on - and we need more small businesses in our communities.

Thank you for considering my testimony. Farwell Gallery is located at 4721 Farwell Street Suite B McFarland WI 53558 our website is www.farwellgallery.com

Please let me know if you have any questions-

Kristin Ellis - Owner Farwell Gallery
She/Her/Hers
608.225.8647
www.farwellgallery.com

Testimony submitted via email to Rep. Alex Joers and Sen. Kelda Roys, co-authors of AB 963 / SB 891.

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Tortillas Los Angeles
Wyocena

Tortillas Los Angeles is currently farming in Wyocena WI, cooking at FEED Kitchens and distributing from our two commercial spaces at Femrite Dr in Madison to farmers markets from May to October of each year. Proudly help Wisconsin improve health through food. FRESH, NATURAL and NUTRITIOUS from farm to table. Organic Real Project. Working closely year by year with USDA, Universities non Profit Organizations like Marble Seed.Org to go more directly to Pantries and general public.

We still improving and finishing our two commercial spaces at Femrite Dr in Madison that will allow our Tortilla Factory and kitchen in the months to come due to short of finances but, we don't give up. We will be done in the near future.

Since 2021 that we were benefit with a grant for this Main Street Bounceback Program to occupy these two vacant spaces that still no finished. The grant and the program help us to survive after the pandemic.

Many, Many thanks. We are very grateful!

For all our feelings after we realize this program helped us to continue in business. We strongly Support the AB 963/SB891 bill.

Not only because this program helped us to occupy a vacant space or vacant spaces! It is a benefit for Landlords and very possible that Businesses like our Business hire employees in the near future that benefit our Community City and the State as well.

Sincerely,

Tortillas Los Angeles team.
Angel and Leticia Flores
Owners.

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Chandler House Bakery
Watertown, WI

My name is Charity Chandler. My wife, April, and I own Chandler House Bakery in Watertown. We started as a cottage bakery, progressed to a licensed rented commercial kitchen and, in 2022, purchased a building on Main Street in my hometown. It was a bakery that I went to with my grandma as a child and has primarily housed a bakery since the 1930s.

I moved home to reinvest in my community and in my historic downtown. The building we purchased needed significant internal renovations to ensure the quality and safety of the baked goods we produce. The Main Street Bounceback program allowed us to do more of the initial projects we have on our constantly evolving building wish list. Starting a small business, in any climate, is a challenge. On the heels of the pandemic, I feel that this program made and continues to make a significant difference for small business owners. We strongly support AB 963/SB 891. We feel it's a very important step toward supporting small businesses.

Further, we'd love to see the program expanded to offer matching funds grants as small businesses continue to grow to address infrastructure, programmatic and expansion opportunities. This would be investing in businesses who continue to invest in themselves and their communities.

While we, unfortunately, cannot testify in person given my day job has me in Pasadena for a meeting and April is busily baking (it's Valentine's Day), if we could be there, we would resoundingly put our voices to the support of this program. We've seen a shift, and have had customers share the same perspective, that people WANT to return to Main Streets. They want the small, custom shops with personalized service that they may have known in their youth or that COVID after effects re-inspired. There will always be a place for the Amazons, Walmarts and big box stores, but someone who knows your name, your family, your favorite treat, or who inspires a legacy of memories made shopping in your small Main Street store, that's more than just a bounceback investment in a building - it's an investment in COMMUNITY building.

Warmly, and with thanks,

Charity & April Chandler

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Tiffani's Bridal
Appleton

I am thrilled to share our heartfelt appreciation for the transformative impact the Main Street Bounceback Grant has had on our bridal store. The \$10,000 grant has been instrumental in steering us towards a new and promising chapter by facilitating our move to a strategic new location.

This grant couldn't have come at a more opportune time, offering us the financial means to embark on this significant endeavor. Relocating our store has proven to be a pivotal decision, as it has allowed us to tap into a broader customer base and establish a more prominent presence in the bridal marketplace.

The Main Street Bounceback Grant empowered us to secure a location that aligns perfectly with our vision for the future. Our new space is not only more spacious and visually appealing but is also strategically situated to attract a diverse range of customers, reinforcing our position as a prominent bridal destination in the community.

The investment in our new location extends beyond the physical space. It has allowed us to create a more immersive and welcoming environment for our brides-to-be, enhancing their overall shopping experience. The grant funds were utilized to implement modern and inviting interior designs, ensuring that every visit to our store becomes a memorable and delightful experience.

In addition to the physical move, the grant has enabled us to implement innovative marketing strategies that have successfully reintroduced our store to the community and beyond. The buzz around our relocation has garnered increased attention and foot traffic, translating into tangible growth and a more substantial market share.

We are profoundly grateful to the Main Street Bounceback Grant for providing us with the means to embark on this exciting journey. The positive impact on our store's visibility, customer engagement, and overall business outlook is unmistakable. This move has not only elevated our standing in the bridal industry but has also positioned us as a trailblazer in our marketplace.

Thank you once again for this invaluable opportunity. We are enthusiastic about the future and look forward to continuing to provide an exceptional bridal experience in our new and improved location.

Warm Regards,

Tiffany Ebbans, Owner
Tiffani's Bridal

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

BeneBlends
Madison

To whom it may concern,

My name is Laura Behrends and I own BeneBlends: a smoothie and juice bar on Madison's West side that offers smoothies, bowls, and juices. BeneBlends was able to open its doors for business in December of 2021. I opened BeneBlends as a 25 year old with minimal business experience or background, and at such a young age, with minimal funds to personally provide for my business.

Receiving the Mainstreet Bounceback grant in 2021 was an incredibly huge help for myself and my business. It gave me a better opportunity to open what is now a successful and quickly growing business. Without the grant, I'd be further into loans and debts. I wish I could better articulate the positive impact the grant has had for me and my business, but there aren't many words for how big of a difference the opportunity for a grant like this provided for myself, my business, and in turn the greater Madison area to now have better access to healthy and sustainable products.

I strongly support the notion to continue this grant, and encourage you to do so as well. For business owners of any sort of minority: age, race, gender, etc. Grants like this help create incredible opportunities.

Thank you for your time and attention to this email, and I'm happy to answer any follow up questions if needed.

Best,

Laura Behrends

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Sweet Peas
Mayville

I am writing to let you know that I support AB 963/SB 891 which is scheduled for a hearing on Wednesday, February 14th. My husband and I moved to Wisconsin in 2022 and with us came our business and aspirations for its growth. We purchased a historic building on Main Street in Mayville, WI, just after the pandemic. Honestly, we did not know the depth of support we would receive. This support was multi-faceted, however, I want to focus on the financial support provided by the Bounceback program, because it is a major reason we are still here pursuing the growth of our pie business

Opening, relocating, and expanding is both risky and very expensive. Knowing that the community we are in and the state that will benefit from our success are partnering with us in the financial risk makes it easier at the beginning of the venture. Having access to no-interest funds at such a critical time as a start-up made an almost immeasurable difference for us. Additionally, the support we received financially has been something that I have talked about with other people who want to move here to start a business or whom we have met since we moved. I communicate my belief that this assistance sets Wisconsin apart from other states and is a reason they should consider taking risks here, too.

We are heading into our fourth year of business and have over 51 positive business reviews on Google. We have continued to scale up. The community comes to celebrate family and important events and to enjoy a beloved building that was closed for over 30 years. We have supported our community by offering discounted pies as fundraisers and providing desserts for various banquets and events. In our busiest season, we employ up to 9 people. We provide on-the-job training to high school students and are active in bringing innovations to the business district of our 5,000-person town.

The grant was what we needed to start strong, and we intend to continue to pay it back year by year that we are here in this town that has one less vacant building to worry about.

Sincerely,

Rachel Smith
4 S Main St, Mayville, WI 53050
rsmith5874@gmail.com
(763) 498 - 4895

P.S. hopefully very shortly we will acquire, renovate, and bring new business to another vacant main street building as well.

Testimony submitted via email to Rep. Alex Joers and Sen. Kelda Roys, co-authors of AB 963 / SB 891.

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

REAP Food Group
Madison

I am writing in support of AB 963/SB 891. In 2022, REAP Food Group received a Main Street Bounceback grant when we moved to Garver Feed Mill. The \$10,000 grant helped the organization greatly with moving expenses as well as updating flooring and plumbing in our new wonderful space.

Without the \$10,000 coming up with that money in a short timeframe for moving would have been rather difficult. Moving to Garver Feed Mill has been very transformational for the organization. Our visibility has increased greatly, and we have a wonderful space to invite supporters and community partners to.

I am delighted to hear this bill has support. As we have moved through the peak of the pandemic and are still figuring out what consumer habits are, I feel filling vacant offices and storefronts is crucial for our local economies to thrive. These grants will help countless business owners and organizations make strategic moves that will benefit them and their local economies.

Phil
Philip Kauth
Executive Director
REAP Food Group
3241 Garver Green #240
Madison, WI 53704

(608) 310-7836
philk@reapfoodgroup.org

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Rod's Ride On Powersports
La Crosse

I would like to give feedback on the Main Street Bounceback Program. Two years ago I purchased a building that had been vacant for 3 years. I was made aware of the Bounceback Program by a member of a networking group I belong to. I remodeled the building plus added a 10,000 square foot showroom for my Prairie Motorsports dealership. The \$10,000 grant was very helpful and much appreciated. I would like to voice my support for continuing this vital program. Starting a small business comes with costs that come up that are unforeseen (it definitely was in my case). These grants help business owner's chances of staying in business and most importantly, creating jobs.

Thank You,

Rod Hall / President/General Manager
Rod's Ride On Powersports
Prairie Motor Sports

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

14 South Artists, Inc.
Oregon

My name is Francine Tompkins, and I am the current president of 14 South Artists, Inc. Our non-profit art association, located in Oregon, Wisconsin, was a recent recipient of a Main Street Bounceback Grant (awarded in fiscal year 2022). I am delighted to present a letter of support for proposed legislation AB 963/SB 891.

There are many proven benefits of how the arts, visual and performing arts, promote the general well-being of individuals as well as contribute to the economic growth of a community. The central mission of our organization was created with the intent of furthering both social and economic "wellness" within our local communities.

Since its founding in 2004, members of 14 South Artists have provided varied opportunities for the public to purchase art from local artists and interact with our members at art shows, our yearly art tour, and at our art-focused educational programs and art classes.

Our members have also given back to the community by volunteering and supporting local initiatives and events.

Over the years, these activities have effectively served to advanced our mission, but it wasn't until 2022, when we were awarded the grant, that we were able to significantly enhance the community focus of our mission by renting an empty building downtown. It was this act of obtaining a brick-and-mortar presence in the community that "cemented" this relationship.

The building we are in was built in 1899 and originally functioned as the pump house for the village water tower. This building is on the federal and state historic registry and was restored in 2015 with funding from the community. It reopened that same year as the Village of Oregon Welcome Center. At the onset of Covid in 2020, the building closed and remained closed until we took possession in June of 2022.

The building now functions as the Oregon Art Center, Home of 14 South Artists, Inc. (see attachment) and serves the organization and the community by providing a central location for an art gallery and art classes.

Sometimes it is difficult to quantify the impact of an initiative, but we do have concrete evidence that speaks directly to this point.

First and foremost, we have shown that 14 South Artists, Inc. can operate a successful gallery. Since formally opening the Oregon Art Center in June of 2022, we have had over 1500 visitors. Sales of art have increased steadily over time, as the number of visitors have increased. During 2023 our art sales generated sufficient income to fully support our financial obligations for the 2024 calendar year.

Testimony submitted via email to Rep. Alex Joers and Sen. Kelda Roys, co-authors of AB 963 / SB 891.

In 2023, we were formally recognized by the Oregon Chamber of Commerce for our contribution to maintaining a local historic venue. During this same year we also received substantial financial donations from local businesses, including One Community Bank, and individuals within the community.

Our members have also expanded their involvement in community activities. We have members that serve on the new Oregon Village Public Art committee and volunteer to raise funds for other local non-profit organizations (e.g., new library, preschool, Nature Alliance, etc.)

Without the funds provided by the Mainstreet Bounceback Grant, this building would likely have remained empty. Up until the time that we approached the Oregon Village Board with a proposal to rent the building, no one had come forward to show an interest.

As mentioned, the Oregon Village Board has explicitly acknowledged the important role we play as valued care-takers of this historic site and as ambassadors for the downtown. As a result, we are in the process of securing a new three-year lease with the Village.

We, as an organization, have clearly benefited from our residency in the Village of Oregon's downtown community. It is my hope that Wisconsin's legislators will afford other individuals/organizations the same opportunity to contribute to the social and economic wellness of their communities through the continuation of this grant program.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our experience.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Francine Tompkins, PhD
President 14 South Artists, Inc.

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Opus Bakehouse
Onalaska

I am writing this message in support of AB 963/SB 891. In 2022, I received a \$10,000 grant that made it possible for me to open a small bakery on Main Street in Onalaska, Wisconsin. The space had been vacated by another baker, and I had the good fortune to purchase most of their equipment. Previously, I had baked my sourdough breads and pastries out of a shared kitchen and sold them at the local farmers' market. The Bounceback grant I received enabled me to make the leap into my own production and retail space. In addition to helping me pay for the up-front equipment costs and erect a sign I was proud of, the grant money also covered my first 6 months of rent.

I believe this program to be a critical part of empowering small and first-time business owners to start or expand their operations. It is no small task to compete with very large, established businesses. But if we wish to revitalize our neglected downtown and neighborhood commercial zones and bring business back from the large commercial strips at the fringes of our towns, small, diverse businesses owned by community members are going to be the key. Grants like those offered by the Main Street Bounceback program provide a significant "bang for the buck" for small entrepreneurs like me.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience with you!

Trevor Brown
Owner/operator
Opus Bakehouse, LLC
1125 Main Street, Onalaska, WI 54601
<https://www.facebook.com/OPUSbakehouse/>

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Penton Counseling LLC
Fond du Lac

I am writing to you in support of AB 963/SB 891. I received the Main Street Bounceback grant, and it allowed me to open my sole proprietorship counseling business in Fond du Lac called Penton Counseling LLC. Without the grant, I would not have been able to open up the business in Fond du Lac. I would have had to first be a contractor for places in the Milwaukee or Madison area. Building a full client list is key to sustaining the business. If I had grown my client list in another city as a contractor, I would have eventually split off in that city to start my own business there. The grant allowed me to build my client list in Fond du Lac as an owner immediately.

My business plan is in Stage 2 of 5 stages:

1. Get a master's degree in counseling
2. Become an independent, fully Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) with credentialing with several insurance companies
3. Take on students
 - a. Train them well
 - b. Treat them like gold
 - c. It can be an extended interview to find excellent employees
4. Hire counselors
 - a. Pay them well with good benefits
 - b. Treat them like gold
 - c. If they leave, send them off with pomp and circumstance
 - i. Gain a source of good referrals for business collaborations, students, and employees
5. Purchase a mixed commercial and residential property on Main Street in Fond du Lac
 - a. The counseling business will take up the first floor
 - b. Engage in exciting group counseling opportunities, like 'Adult Improv for the Socially Anxious'
 - c. If there's a basement space that's big enough, set up a Break Room that's open for the public to engage in some therapeutic emotional release
 - i. Break Rooms typically have objects to smash
 - d. Create and run another business to rent out the units on the upper floor with affordable rates
 - i. I have a potential partner who has experience with doing the work to flip houses and has connections with contractors

None of this would happen in Fond du Lac if not for the Mainstreet Bounceback grant, of which I am extremely grateful. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Tony Penton, LPC
Penton Counseling LLC
17 Forest Ave, Suite 015
Fond du Lac, WI 54935
Cell: 414-253-1227

Testimony submitted via email to Rep. Alex Joers and Sen. Kelda Roys, co-authors of AB 963 / SB 891.

February 12, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Under One Woof
Wautoma

I am writing to show tremendous support for AB 963/SB 891. The Main Street Bounceback Grant helped my business immensely!

Is exactly what Wisconsin needs to revitalize our downtowns! it enabled me to fund improvements to my business that I otherwise would not have been able to do! There is no question it was beneficial to my success!

Thank you for your time,

Joliene Heiden
Under One Woof
Main st., Wautoma, WI

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Relic Road Junk & Vintage - Onalaska
Gasoline Alley - Onalaska
The Retro Ranch - Black River Falls

Hi, My name is Kari Christenson and I own 3 businesses in Western Wisconsin. I would have gladly driven to Madison to support this legislation if I had been able to rearrange my schedule for this week. In the absence of doing so, allow me to submit this statement for consideration.

In 2018, I made the difficult decision to leave the healthcare industry. I had been doing domestic violence and child abuse advocacy work for the last 5 years of my tenure at Gundersen Health System in La Crosse, all while raising two teenage girls, caring for a grandparent on hospice and trying to help my husband run our family business. I was incredibly burnt out and had nothing else to give. We decided to focus on running our family business and then covid happened. Our business was shut down as we were not essential, I felt like I had abandoned the community that needed as many healthcare workers as possible, and life was very uncertain. Then the government released funding opportunities that we utilized to keep our employees. That helped us stay afloat.

When we started to emerge from the pandemic, life slowly got back to normal, and we had an opportunity to turn a vacant commercial space in Black River Falls, WI into another business opportunity. We would not have been able to do so without the funding assistance provided by the Mainstreet Bounceback grants. This enabled us to retrofit the electrical and update other necessary items before we opened our doors as The Retro Ranch in 2022. Our vintage shop right off the interstate has folks stopping by our charming little Wisconsin town on their way by enroute to Minneapolis or Chicago. Those dollars spent on items that have been once loved already not only support the recycling efforts of our communities, but our customers also have a little bite to eat at an area restaurant, get gas at a local gas station and check out the other antique shops in the area while they are visiting us. This infusion of dollars into the community allows us to employ staff and improve the culture of our small town. Simply put, we would not have had the capital to venture into that market after covid had it not been for the Mainstreet Bounceback grant.

Thank you for your efforts to support Wisconsin's small family businesses that make our communities great places to live and raise a family! Our family and staff sure appreciate it!

Kari Christenson, MBA
Chief Junking Officer
Relic Road Junk & Vintage ~ Gasoline Alley ~ The Retro Ranch

Mailing Address at Relic Road:
N5539 Penney Lane
Onalaska, WI 54650
(608) 615-7751

Testimony submitted via email to Rep. Alex Joers and Sen. Kelda Roys, co-authors of AB 963 / SB 891.

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Smiling Coast Beauty Salon LLC
Madison, WI

To Whom it may concern:

Just saw this email about the hearing. I still want to write to say that the project is the reason why I am still in business. I a dream for the past 20 years to get my own salon but rent was so expensive that I couldn't. When I was offered this old office space that was not used for years I was not able to afford to change the dirty carpet or paint the place to make it healthy and decent for my clients. That was when i heard about the project. I am so grateful for the support. With three of my kids all in college I am able to make ends meet because of this salon. Not forgetting the classes that I attended on quickbooks I don't have to pay any extra money to get my books. I am currently registered in other administrative classes that's going to help me manage the daily running of the salon. Just hired a full time employee and myself. I am available for interview or anything that I can do to keep the program for others like me.

Your sincerely

Jimbi
Smiling Coast Beauty Salon LLC

February 12, 2024

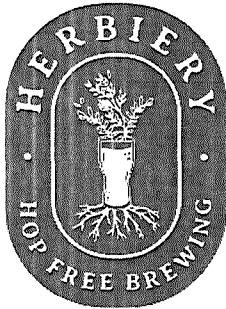
Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Herbiery
Madison

The Mainstreet Bounceback Grant program allowed Herbiery, a small Madison, WI brewery, to open our first taproom. I would love to see this program continue.

Thank you,

All the Best,



Nia Ryan
Founder and Herbalist
Herbiery Brewing
nia@herbiery.com | 630.881.0005
pronouns: They/Them/Theirs

*Modern Brewing, Timeless Ingredients at
herbiery.com*



February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Sturgeon Spirits Craft Distillery
Oshkosh

Hello,

I just wanted to express my support for continuing the main street bounceback program. I was a grant recipient in 2022 and it made a huge difference in getting my business off the ground.

We are now in our second year and employ 5 people. For a small investment, it made a big impact on us and helped our community!

Stop in and visit sometime to see for yourself!

Thank you,

Karl Loewenstein
President, Sturgeon Spirits Craft Distillery
2663 Oregon St.
Oshkosh, WI 54902

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

The House Cafe and Bakery
New Glarus

I wanted to reach out today to let you know that I support AB 963/SB891. I wish I could attend in-person tomorrow, however, since I can't, I wanted to make sure to send in a written statement regarding my support.

I was the very fortunate recipient of one of the Mainstreet Bounceback Grants, and while my business did eventually close due to a variety of factors, this grant was single-handedly one of the most important steps in the opening days of my business. The grant helped us in so many ways, and was a crucial factor in our ability to scale up production to meet the needs and demands of my customers and community.

By continuing to support small local businesses with these grants, you're empowering businesses to create local jobs. In addition, with so much tourism around Wisconsin, it gives unique reasons for people to visit various towns. If every town has nothing but big chains, there is no reason to visit WI (let alone move to WI).

I know that I personally only seek out exploring vacation spots based on the local unique businesses--not to go to yet another Chipotle, Subway, or Cheesecake Factory that I could find anywhere. I know that the excitement from my own customers reflected a similar sentiment: I had people regularly traveling from all over the state, Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa to come visit my shop, and when they did, they were also often making it an excuse to take a vacation in our small town or to go try out some of the other small town offerings.

The best places in Wisconsin are those that are unique, reflecting creativity and entrepreneurship. With so many barriers to starting a business these days, your grants are such a massive impetus for people to be willing to take that step and create businesses and jobs in Wisconsin in a meaningful way.

Best regards,

Kaylee Walters

February 13, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

ID Marketing
Little Chute

I am writing to express my support for the Bounce-Back Bill AB 963/SB891. I had the opportunity to take advantage of this bill back in 2022, which helped me to rent an office space that I was unsure if I could afford at the time. It was a great opportunity for me to expand my business. Now because of the space we are in, my business last year had a 35% growth increase.

I am certain that this program has been very beneficial for the landlord as well. We had a building that was vacant for many years, but now it's occupied. Thanks to this program, we now have a thriving community with more successful businesses in our town.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Sue Spierings
Owner of ID Marketing LLC
127 E Main St, Little Chute, WI 54140
Suite 101

February 14, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Binkens African Braids
Madison

My name is Ndey Binta Sarr, owner of Binken's African Braids. I started the braiding business in October 2021 in a small office space. As a recipient of the Bounce Back Grant, I support AB 963/SB 891. When I started, I had only one station at the salon. When I received the grant, I was able to expand to three stations, and bought most of the materials needed for the salon which makes our work easier for me. It also helped me pay my monthly rent for some time as the business was slow at the beginning due to Covid 19. Additionally, with that grant, I started offering braiding classes to help people learn the trade how to be their own entrepreneurs.

Now that I have moved to a storefront, I plan to hire more people for the business. Am looking for a barber, nail tech, spa, and massage person. I also plan to have signage for the business which costs around \$7000. All these require more money to make the business operate smoothly. With such funds, if approved, I will be able to operate a beauty plaza where we can offer multiple beauty services in one place. Am working on that plan but it will be harder to achieve in the absence of grants.

I believe that there are other small businesses like mine that are struggling with their operations or planning to expand but are being constrained by the lack of funding. As per these difficulties, I am optimistic that if this grant is approved, it will help us uplift our businesses, pay our rents and be able to hire more people.

Ndey Binta Sarr (Owner)
Binkens African Braids LLC

February 14, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Children's Museum of Rock County
Janesville

Hello,

As a recipient of a Bounceback Grant to help establish a children's museum in Janesville, WI, we support continuing this program. It has been extremely helpful to offset the start up costs of our volunteer-run non-profit.

Thank you,

Claire Gray

--

Claire Gray
Board Member
Children's Museum of Rock County (CMRC)
We Take Play Seriously!
651.295.3804 (mobile)

February 14, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Lash Academy
Appleton

Good morning, I am emailing you to say I am in support of bill AB 963/SB 891. The Main Street Bounceback Grant help me tremendously and I am grateful . This grant is a blessing for business owners that really are in need. There are bills passed daily that do not directly help businesses. With this bill comes great change as it gives the people hope, confidence, and the ambition needed for a successful business. This grant can bring a beautiful chance to the community by adding businesses that are needed. There are bills passed daily that do not directly help businesses.

With this bill comes great change as it gives the people hope, confidence, and the ambition needed for a successful business. This grant can bring a beautiful chance to the community by adding businesses that are needed to the neighborhood as well as help assist businesses to expand businesses helping them to stay in business. The impact and chance this bill will bring forth will give the people hope it also assists to be able to create jobs and other with unlimited possibilities.

It takes a village to raise a child and this bill is the village to raise the child that are many businesses owners child and children. I'm praying that this bill does pass and continues to help those in need.

Lash Academy
Learn and Succeed Here

February 14, 2024

Submitted in support of continuing Main Street Bounceback

Atmospheric Floral
Madison

Thank you for the chance to offer testimony in support of this bill.

I am Mary Jo Borchardt, the owner of Atmospheric Floral, a floral design company for weddings and events established in 2016. We were grateful to receive a Main Street Bounceback Grant in 2022. Having limped our way through the pandemic as an event-based business, this grant was a lifeline, and allowed us to move from our home-based design studio and expand our capacity in every way.

Our physical capacity expanded from 234 SF at home to 2200 SF with this move - a space that could now physically accommodate the bodies of additional employees. Since moving, we've added three part time staff and four seasonal staff during the wedding season. We expect to add several more positions in 2024 to meet the needs of our booked business.

Expanding our physical capacity also meant that we were able to take on larger weddings and events, with the space needed to process bulk flowers, design them, and then store them in a right-sized cooler until delivery. We could now string garlands of 75' with ease and design floral installations in-house, suspended from our new 10 ft ceilings. This expansion allowed us to innovate with rolling carts, increasing our efficiency while decreasing the physical toll on our bodies. The floral design business is essentially a business of moving large quantities of water in buckets and crates of vases, so moving them by cart as much as possible in studio and at the event site is a game-changer.

We are now able to take on multiple events per weekend with the increase in capacity. As a primarily seasonal business so heavily involved in the wedding industry, events occur on finite weekend days from Spring to Fall, so taking on more events per day is a necessary part of our growth strategy.

In short, moving to a space of greater capacity has been crucial to the growth of our business, which is now thriving. The Main Street Bounceback Grant not only made it financially possible to make this leap, but it also fostered a sense of support from our beloved state in recognizing the important place small business owners like myself have in our local economy. The sales tax revenue and payroll taxes we've generated through this growth have more than repaid the \$10,000 grant, and will continue to pay dividends to the State of Wisconsin.

The space we've leased since March 2022 had been vacant since 2020, due in no small part to COVID. Without the grant, we would never have considered it, owing to the amount of retrofitting needed to make it suitable for floral design and the space's footprint, which was larger than we estimated needing. We now appreciate how the extra space allows for more growth without having to move prematurely.

This grant has been a vital part of our business' growth and subsequent contribution to our local economy. We strongly encourage you to make the program permanent and reap the many benefits of a relatively small investment in the small businesses and communities of your state.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Jo Borchardt

Testimony submitted via email to Rep. Alex Joers and Sen. Kelda Roys, co-authors of AB 963 / SB 891.