

Hello, I am writing this letter in hopes to better explain my struggles as a business owner during Covid-19. I own The University Club, a wedding venue located at 1518 and 1526 5th Avenue in Moline. I recently purchased this business in April of 2019 along with The Reliance Building itself. As any business I knew going in that the first few years were going to be a huge undertaking but I fell in love the first second I stepped foot inside this historic building. We struggled the first year keeping up with our new investment but we managed to scrape by and made a few improvements along the way. One of the big investments we made to the outside of our building was the color changing uplighting, which I feel adds a great vibe to The Downtown Moline District. In addition we made huge strides with the venue. We booked almost 100% more weddings in a very short amount of time, which doubles the amount of potential business to the community that stems off our business. On average we have anywhere from 200-600 people visiting our building any given Saturday. This means traffic to the local businesses in The Downtown Moline area, Restaurants, Bars, Hotels and etc.

I had many plans for future endeavors such as a co workspace and small business incubator. We were looking to build a few more offices and apartments within our building. We were starting to host our own private events like comedy shows, Bridal Expos, Halloween Parties, Adult Prom, and much more, which had a huge impact on local bars and restaurants as well. We believe in building a strong community around our business.

We came into 2020 with big intentions. We had nearly 60 events on our calendar this year and it was still growing. This was supposed to be one of the biggest years for the wedding industry and Covid-19 took it all away from us. We have had a complete loss of events and have not had a single wedding since February. All of the events we had either rescheduled till next year, moved to the Iowa side or completely cancelled all together. To say this has been a struggle in an extreme understatement. With the lack of income, it set me behind on my mortgage and other payments. I pushed through as long as I could but eventually had to give up the building to save what I could of the venue. I didn't have any sort of rainy day fund setup yet as the business was still in its early stages of growing. I applied for the PPP but was not approved. I have been doing everything that I can to stay a float but I am drowning in stress. I have thought about giving up all together but I see so much potential in what The University Club has to offer.

We were finally supposed to have our first wedding since the beginning of Covid-19 on November 14th and another to follow on the 21st. We had planned the entire reception with the bride and groom. Placed orders with our caterer, put together the room layout. I got paid in full for the event and was starting to feel a little relief. Soon after I deposited the check and was getting ready to place orders I was notified that we were being forced to close down for another 2 weeks. The wedding for the 21st cancelled right away. The wedding for the 14th wanted us to go against orders and host the wedding anyways. I told them that I was not comfortable with doing so and ended up refunding them their entire check back. Super frustrating to say the least. Our next wedding is not until New Years Eve and I am unsure if we will even be able to host that event either. I knew going into this business it was not going to be easy but this year has been a rollercoaster of emotion.

I am hoping that I can be approved for the \$5000 that is being offered as I have been following all guidelines through the entire process.

Thank you for your time and consideration
Kelley Klemme
The University Club
563-349-7276