[STORE LOGO]

[DATE]

[THE HONORABLE][FIRST NAME][LAST NAME]  
[ADDRESS]  
[CITY] Delaware [ZIP CODE]

Dear [SENATOR] [ASSEMBLYMEMBER] [REPRESENTATIVE] [LOCAL OFFICIAL]

As an independent bookseller in [TOWN], I am writing today to introduce myself and to share with you what I hope will be helpful and actionable insight into the state of local businesses in my area. Main Street retailers in Delaware are a crucial part of each community, both as job creators and important hubs of community, and I’m writing to urge you to support Main Street retailers.

I do know much has been made about the decline of Main Street businesses, but actually there has been a resurgence in independent bookselling over the past five years. Book sales in independent stores grew almost 8 percent in 2012 in the U.S. over the previous year, and independent bookstores held on to almost all those gains in 2013. In 2014, for 47 out of 52 weeks, unit sales of books were up over the year before, and in 2015 sales in the indie bookstore channel were up a little more than 10 percent, continuing the positive news that we have seen in recent years.

While not every bookstore or community has seen this growth, the national trends are very clear.

New stores are opening. There has been a 35 percent increase in the number of independent bookstore locations since 2009, existing stores are opening in new locations, and established stores are beings successfully sold to new owners, often younger owners as a new generation of booksellers enters the industry.

The “Localism” movement has become a major influence in the decisions of consumers regarding where they will make their purchases and spend their dollars. Nationally, literally millions of consumers are deciding to shop in a locally owned business, like mine, because it is locally owned.

Importantly, though, locally owned businesses still face many challenges. Certainly, there are policy issues on which we need your support. Given the importance of small businesses to the fiscal health of both the state and local community, I feel it is essential that small businesses like mine be provided a seat at a table when lawmakers and officials are seeking guidance, especially when it comes to [the current minimum wage issue] [providing out-of-state retailers with taxpayer-funded subsidies].

[TEXT DRAFT FOR MINIMUM WAGE LETTER] Across the country, the fight to increase the minimum wage has made news, but with little space given to how increases may effect small businesses like mine. As an independent bookseller, customer service is what often differentiates me from large chains, so it is crucial that I hire the best workers. This often means paying above the minimum wage

However, while I do not oppose the minimum wage, I believe it is crucial that, in any discussion about increased wages, you include small businesses at the table. It does not take much of an increase to send a successful bookstore – which operates at about a 2 percent net profit margin -- from the black into the red. The small business realities are that a drastic increase could result in an overall loss of jobs. For that reason, it is important that any wage increase be coupled with your support of Main Street. If we increase the minimum wage, we must support those who are paying that wage, and that means small businesses. Garnering the insight of local businesses on the minimum wage question can ensure any wage increase is built on a solid, economic foundation.

[TEXT DRAFT FOR TAX SUBSIDY LETTER] The perception that chain stores or corporate retailers bring more jobs to a community is just that, perception – not reality. Studies have shown that local businesses create more jobs and return more dollars back to their local community than any chain or remote retailer.

Providing tax incentives to remote retail chains like Amazon will do more harm for this community than good. A recent study, *Amazon and Empty Storefronts*, conducted by Civic Economics, reported that, in 2015, in Delaware, Amazon sold $166.7 million worth of retail goods. These sales are the equivalent of 116 retail storefronts or 400,000 square feet of commercial space, which might have paid $500,000 in property taxes.

As Amazon grows and takes market share from other retailers, the result is a decline in jobs, not a gain.

Yet, despite this, Amazon and its promises of jobs resulted in communities across the country providing the online retailer with $431 million in tax incentives and other subsidies from local governments, according to the Good Jobs First subsidy tracker. The Amazon subsidies are just one example, as I believe providing subsidies to any corporate retailer, ultimately, would result in a net loss of jobs.

I hope we can meet to discuss these issues in person at a time that is convenient for you. Or, alternatively, my colleagues and I would be pleased to meet with you at my store.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,