[DATE]

Dear [Governor/State official/local official]:

As the [OWNER/MANAGER] of an independently owned business in [CITY], [STATE], I believe that Amazon’s refusal to locate in [NAME OF LOCATION] was the best possible outcome for our state. It provides you and your fellow lawmakers with a tremendous opportunity to focus public resources where it will actually provide [CITY] and, indeed, our entire state, with a much greater return on investment: Independent businesses.

To be frank, I think it is bad public policy to offer massive subsidies of public funds and tax incentives to a large mega-corporation to locate in the state. It is especially egregious that officials concealed the offers from the public and, in many cases, bypassed public review. It is, after all, taxpayer money that residents expected to go to help their communities, not line the pockets of one of the world’s largest and most profitable corporations

But now that Amazon has chosen to take two other cities for a ride, it presents [STATE] with a great opportunity to use this money in a way that will make a positive impact for everyone in this state. The driver of every state’s economy is indisputably small business. We hear it said by lawmakers at the local, state, and federal levels, yet too often this seem to be nothing more than lip service – especially when cities and states like ours jump over themselves to provide taxpayer money to a company that is notorious for using that money to drive in-state retailers like mine out of business. Investing in the shuttering of Main Street businesses – which is what would have happened if Amazon had accepted your offer -- would hardly be a boon to any state’s economy.

Amazon does not create jobs – in fact, the opposite is the case.

In the study, [*Amazon and Empty Storefronts*](http://www.civiceconomics.com/empty-storefronts.html), commissioned by the American Booksellers Association and conducted by Civic Economics, in 2015 Amazon sold $55.6 billion worth of retail goods nationwide—that is the equivalent of 39,000 retail storefronts or 133 million square feet of commercial space, which might have paid $528 million in property taxes. The end result was a total of more than $1.2 billion in revenue lost to state and local governments. Overall, Amazon sales produced a net loss of more than 222,000 thousand retail jobs across the country.

Amazon’s third-party marketplace, much like that of eBay’s, hosts sellers from around the country. Though the sales mechanism is facilitated by Amazon, only a small portion of sellers collect and remit sales tax where it is due. This has resulted in lost sales tax revenue in communities across the country, including New York State. Far from being a boon to states, Amazon represents more of an economic black hole.

Moreover, the recent Civic Economics study, [*Prime Numbers: Amazon and American Communities*](http://www.civiceconomics.com/primenumbers.html), noted that in 2018, Amazon and its third-party marketplace vendors sold $189 billion of retail goods in the United States. These transactions resulted in 62,000 displaced shops, or 540 million square feet, and some $5.5-7.0 billion in uncollected sales taxes.

And while Amazon undermines the revenue sources of local and state governments, it also imposes direct costs on the public, according to [*Amazon’s Stranglehold*](https://ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ILSR_AmazonReport_final.pdf), a report from the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. The report points out that one example is infrastructure. “Trucks laden with Amazon delivery boxes put wear-and-tear on roads,” the report notes, “and Amazon not only skirts the taxes that pay for upkeep on those roads, it’s also skilled at getting local governments—desperate for employment in an Amazon economy that is shrinking opportunity—to pay for new ones.” Amazon also imposes costs such as increased traffic, the study further noted. In New Jersey, after Amazon opened up a new fulfillment center, the mass of employees driving to the site led to gridlocked roads and a 300 percent increase in the accident count.

For whatever pluses you thought Amazon may have brought this state, those purported gains are far outweighed by costly tax incentives, job losses, and Amazon’s refusal to collect and remit sales tax for third-party marketplace sales into the state. Virginia will find this out in the long run, and at the expense of small businesses. Our state, on the other hand, has a chance to invest in our communities.

I believe you should use the money you were going to provide Amazon to help support in-state businesses. I would also urge you to make any such money you invest in community business public for all to see. The benefits of such investment are clear. Small business contribute to the unique and vibrant identities of our local economies. Locally-owned businesses are crucial to thriving states and municipalities, as revenue from independent business is recirculated back into the local community. Businesses like ours are the real backbone of our state’s fiscal health. We are residents here, too. So, when you invest in small businesses, you are literally investing in the people who live in our state. Everybody wins.

And along the way, you may just teach the officials and lawmakers in Virginia the right way to make a state’s economy grow.

I would love to discuss this further either at my store or your local district office at a time that is convenient for you. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,