

MASSACHUSETTS RESTAURANTS UNITED

March 21, 2020

Hon. Charlie Baker, Governor

Hon. Karen Polito, Lt. Governor

Hon. Robert De Leo, Speaker of the House of Representative

Hon. Karen Spilka, President of the Senate

Dear Gov. Baker, Lt. Gov. Polito, Speaker De Leo, President Spilka,

We are independent restaurant owners and operators. We are deeply invested in our neighborhoods and communities. We host the gathering places, the hang outs, the places where everyone knows your name, the go-to celebration space, the go-to mourning place in times of tragedy – we're always there for whomever needs us, whenever they need us. **Now we need you.**

Earlier this week, we circulated a draft of this letter. We hope that this letter made its way to all of you, and we thank you for taking the time to read it – we understand how overwhelming and fluid this situation is. We understand that you, and your teams are working diligently and bravely to steer us through this public health crisis. Thank you for your leadership, and for the steps you have taken thus far.

This updated letter is meant to serve as a concise, actionable, and focused list of requests from an industry that may never recover. We believe that with action **now**, the restaurant industry will lead the Commonwealth's economic recovery from Covid-19. As an industry, there is no denying the collective economic impact of 350,000 hospitality workers, 16,000 businesses, and \$18.7 billion in sales. More than just numbers, restaurants participate in almost every facet of the Commonwealth's economic food chain. From manufacturing, to fishing, to tourism, to agriculture, to services and technology, to sports and entertainment, to real estate there is virtually no area of the economy that restaurants don't directly impact, patronize, support or facilitate.

Reacting to Covid-19, restaurants focused on helping others. We pre-emptively closed our doors, closed businesses that many of us have spent years building, all for the sake of protecting our community. We didn't wait for direction from local leaders, police or others. We didn't protest, file lawsuits, or organize against any public health demand -- we understood that we were on the front lines, and we selflessly acted without hesitation.

None of us had time to wind down operations, talk with landlords, negotiate with vendors, prepare our staff, organize orderly departures – we simply did what needed to be done, as always. Now we're asking the same of you.

FOR URGENT CONSIDERATION AND IMMEDIATE DISSEMINATION

We are asking for short-term, and long-term relief – while the State of Emergency exists, and also as we prepare to open our doors again. We understand this is a big “ask” but restaurants will need a grace period after the crisis is over to help our businesses get back on our feet. Ramping up 16,000 restaurants is a daunting task, and all of us, from steakhouses, to diners, to bistros, to pizza shops will be opening our doors to an uncertain economic recovery. We were the first industry to fall, but there will be others, and perhaps this can serve as a blueprint for how to bring our communities back from the edge.

We are formally and respectfully asking for the following:

Emergency relief for our businesses:

- Establish a grant program for companies with fewer than 125 employees to sustain our businesses and cover our liabilities
- Legislative Action to Close the Virus Exclusion in Business Interruption Insurance. Over the past decade, insurance companies have become more cautious about exposure and as a result, Business Interruption policies now include specific virus exclusions, some of which identify the COVID-19 specifically. A bill is needed to force Business Interruption insurers to provide coverage for this crisis with an effective date of March 16, 2020.
- Suspend payroll, meals, city and local taxes
- Commercial rent forgiveness - mandate that no commercial rent, lease payments, or contract payments be required during the duration of the administrative closure.
- Establish a task force to convene large banks, financial associations, utilities, telecoms, and major employers to identify opportunities to provide relief such as debt and late penalty forgiveness, deferring bills, providing no-interest loans and waiving fees for companies and workers negatively impacted by COVID-19
- Work with federal lawmakers to significantly increase funding for public health and economic development, while facilitating rules and regulations that could provide relief to businesses and workers impacted by COVID-19.
- A moratorium on commercial and residential evictions
- Defer all licensing fees
- Call for payment processors to waive merchant fees
- Freeze on unemployment insurance rate increases

Emergency relief for our employees:

- Immediate and expedited legislation providing compensation to restaurant workers, *regardless of citizenship status*. Our teams, made up of the diverse people who live in Massachusetts, have been living, working, cooking and serving in our communities for years – they’re the heart and soul of our

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restaurants. They need your immediate assistance if they hope to survive this public health and economic crisis.

- Provide emergency grants for loan and debt relief for workers affected by the loss in wages
- Residential rent relief for employees earning less than \$50,000
- Guaranteed free testing for Covid-19 for all citizens in the Commonwealth
- Guaranteed health care for any citizen of the Commonwealth diagnosed with Covid-19

It's hard for any of us to know what the world will look like post Covid-19, but all of us believe that the people of Massachusetts will need plenty of love, kindness and community. Protecting our employees means also making sure that they have jobs to return to when this is over. This virus has changed our world. **You, and the entire Commonwealth, will need us again when this is over.** Restaurants offer us a way forward, a way back to normalcy and community, of coming together and celebrating the best things in life.

Restaurants will be on the front lines of the economic stimulus that we will need. The money that is spent in restaurants filters out in waves through the business community: hiring a workforce, purchasing from multiple vendors, supporting farmers, fishermen and women, insurance companies, and myriad other service companies like waste removal, accountants, banks, delivery services, laundry companies (and so many more) all rely on restaurants for their business. Therefore, Massachusetts relies on restaurants for a road to recovery.

Restaurants will be there for you, please be here for us now.

Tony Maws

Craigie on Main/Craigie Burger

Jonathan Mendez

TRADE/POROTO/Saloniki Greek

Nick Zappia

Craigie Burger

George Athanasopoulos

The Breakfast Club

Michael Leviton

Craigie Burger

Ken Oringer

JK Food Group

Jody Adams

TRADE/POROTO/Saloniki Greek

Jamie Bissonnette

JK Food Group

Eric Papachristos

TRADE/POROTO/Saloniki Greek/The Venetian

Remon Karian

Fiorella's/Fiorella's Express

Elissa Rae

POROTO

Vincent Turco

Gelato & Chill

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Kathy Sidell
Sidell Hospitality

Josh Danoff
Union Square Donuts

Noah Danhoff
Union Square Donuts

Peter & Ginhee Ungár
Tasting Counter

Ana Sortun & Maura Kilpatrick
Oleana/Sarma/Sofra

Dominic & Heather Costa
Revolution Health Kitchen

Tim & Nancy Cushman
Cushman Concepts

Stefanie Gerken
Cushman Concepts

Jeremy & Rebecca Jean
Brassica Kitchen

Samuel Jackson
K.O. Pies

Pam & Chris Willis
Pammy's

Will Gilson
Puritan & Co

Tom Schlesinger-Guidelli
Alcove

Irene Li
Mei Mei Street Kitchen

David Delancey
The Lobster Trap

Ben Snyder
Saloniki Greek

Beka Chezha
Saloniki Greek

Charalampos Asimis
Saloniki Greek

Servio Garcia
Bergamont, BISq, Taqueria El Barrio

Alex Sáenz
BISq, Taqueria El Barrio

Nina & Raffi Festekjian
Anoush'ella

Aleksandr Bakhrakh
Anoush'ella

Alon Munzer
Mamaleh's Delicatessen

Garrett Harker
Eastern Standard

Ming Tsai
Blue Dragon

Carolyn Johnson
Mooncusser Fish House

Michael Serpa
Select Oyster Bar/Grand Tour

Karen Akunowicz
Fox & Knife

Jason Santos
Citrus & Salt/Buttermilk & Bourbon

Michael Schlow
Schlow Restaurant Group

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Mary Dumont

Field & Bench Hospitality

Michael Lombardi

SRV

Kevin O'Donnell

SRV

Carl Dooley

The Table at Season to Taste

Jason Bond

Bondir

Andy Husbands

The Smoke Shop

Brian Rae

Coppa

Ruth-Anne

Second Wind

Lydia Shire

Scampo

Alex Pineda

Scampo

Simon Restrepo

Scampo

Jeremy Sewall

Island Creek Oyster Bar

Chris Douglass

Ashmont Grill/Tavolo

Patrick Lyons

Lyons Group

Jennifer Park

Diesel Café/Forge Baking Co./Bloc Café

Seth Gerber & Douglass Williams

MIDA

Michael Scelfo

Alden & Harlow/Waypoint/Longfellow

Tracy Chang

PAGU

Mike Krupp

Area Four

Joanne Chang & Christopher Myers

Myers & Chang/Flour Bakery

Alex Tannenbaum

Naco Taco/Lily P's

Chris Parsons

Lily P's/The Oyster Club

Jeff Pond

Area Four

Tiffani Faison

Big Heart Hospitality

Manuel Depina

Colonnade Hotel

Tzurit Or

Tatte Bakery & Café

Steve Postal

Commonwealth Kitchen

Chris Coombs

Boston Urban Hospitality

Dave Punch

Sycamore/Little Big Dinner/Buttonwood

Chris Himmel

Himmel Hospitality

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Deirdre Auld

CODA/Salty Pig/SRV

Rebecca Fitzgerald

George Howell Coffee

George Howell

George Howell Coffee

Alberto Cabre & Angelina Jockovich

CasaB

Stanislas Hibert

Forage

Rachel Miller Munzer

State Park/Mamaleh's/Café Du Pays

Barbara Lynch

Barbara Lynch Grupo

Kenshi Imura

Café Sushi

Seizi & Mindy Imura

Café Sushi

Heather Mojer

State Park/Mamaleh's/Café Du Pays

Evan Harrison

State Park/Mamaleh's/Café Du Pays

Josh Kessen

State Park/Mamaleh's/Café Du Pays

Rachael Sundet

State Park/Mamaleh's/Café Du Pays

Tyler Sundet

State Park/Mamaleh's/Café Du Pays

Rachel & Charles Kelsey

Cutty's

Mary Ting Hyatt

Bagelsaurus

Jonathan Gilman

Brato Brewhouse & Kitchen

Phil Bannatyne

Cambridge Brewing Company