

## FINAL LETTER FROM OUR CHAIRMAN



Pat Lee  
MRA Chairman of the Board

Dear Members,

Not that any of you are counting, but this is the 24th monthly letter I have written to MRA membership. That makes this one very bittersweet, as it is my last letter as Chair of the MA Restaurant Association. As I reflect on the past two years, it amazes me how much change we have seen; some of it good and some of it challenging. But we have done it together and for that I thank you.

This month, the Nominating Committee had a very difficult task sifting through all the nominations to arrive at the FY 2020 slate of Board Directors, Executive Committee Members, and of course, our next Chair. To that end, I wish to thank each one for the thoughtfulness and focused approach they took to arrive at a slate which represents the changing demographics of our state, our business segments, and our workforce.

And with that, I could not be more pleased that they have recommended Jeff Gates, from Aquitaine Boston, as our next Chair of the MRA. Jeff has worked tirelessly at promoting our industry, continually meeting with and passionately explaining for both local and federally elected officials about the impact of legislation upon the restaurants on Main Streets across the Commonwealth, for many years. Trust me, we have great leadership going forward.

I also thank those Directors who indicated they would like to be considered for another term and have been nominated to return to service: **Michael Covino, Stephen Miller, Ed Doyle, William Hacking, Dan Doherty, Lou Carrier, Karen Coleman, John Pettine, and Remon Karian.**

*(Continued on page 2)*



I wish also to congratulate our newest Board Members who have been nominated: **Nia Grace**, Darryl's Corner Bar & Kitchen, **Charlie Noyes**, Ninety Nine Restaurant & Pub, **Sumiao Chen**, Sumiao Hunan Kitchen, **Rodrigo Souza**, Comeketo Steakhouse, **Alex Weiss**, US Wealth, **Nicole Green**, Webber Restaurant Group, as well as former Board Member **Steve Uliss** of Firefly's. You will all help make this Board even greater – welcome!

I would like to thank **Bill Brady**, who after a number of years serving the Executive Committee, as well as serving the past two years as President of the Educational Foundation, has decided to take a step away from his duties on the Executive Committee. Bill, you have certainly made an incredible difference across the MRA world.

Which means last but not least, we have two new recommended Executive Committee Members: **Kathi Turner**, of Turner's Seafood, and **Andy Husbands**, of The Smoke Shop. Congratulations to **Denise Herrera** for being nominated as First Vice President. I have seen the passion each bring to table and know they will be great assets for Jeff, Bob Luz and the rest of the team.

I have been humbled and honored to have served this role on behalf of the 1,800 members, who represent 5,500 food & beverage locations, as well as hundreds of supporting business partners. I am so very proud to have been called your Chair, to have represented you and say I am part of this great industry you've built. We are fortunate to have such wonderful operators, business partner and people involved in this industry. I'd like to thank the Executive Board, Board of Directors and the MRA staff for all their hard work in making the MRA a national leader in restaurant associations. I thank each of you for entrusting me with this responsibility, and I look forward to working with all of you in different capacities moving forward. It has been the time of my life!

Pat Lee



MRA Chairman  
[plee@themassrest.org](mailto:plee@themassrest.org)

“Where there is a  
will there is a way”  
– English Proverb

## MRA STAFF

### Bob Luz

President & Chief Executive Officer  
[bluz@themassrest.org](mailto:bluz@themassrest.org)

### MEMBERSHIP TEAM

#### Kerry Miller

Vice President, Operations  
[kmiller@themassrest.org](mailto:kmiller@themassrest.org)

#### Bob Brammer

Member Services Manager - Central & North,  
Cape and Islands  
[bbrammer@themassrest.org](mailto:bbrammer@themassrest.org)

#### Lynne Johnston

Member Services Manager - West  
[ljohnston@themassrest.org](mailto:ljohnston@themassrest.org)

#### Sharon Driscoll

Member Services Manager - Boston & South  
[sdriscoll@themassrest.org](mailto:sdriscoll@themassrest.org)

#### Jennifer Almeida

Director of Education  
[jalmeida@themassrest.org](mailto:jalmeida@themassrest.org)

#### Stephen Clark

Vice President, Government Affairs  
[sclark@themassrest.org](mailto:sclark@themassrest.org)

#### Christine Johnson

Director of Communications  
[cjohnson@themassrest.org](mailto:cjohnson@themassrest.org)

#### Renée Serafino

Director of HR & Business Operations  
[rserafino@themassrest.org](mailto:rserafino@themassrest.org)

#### Tracy Zibell

Educational Foundation Program Assistant  
[tzibell@themassrest.org](mailto:tzibell@themassrest.org)

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## CURRENT ECONOMIC INDICATORS - MASSACHUSETTS MEALS TAX COLLECTIONS

MAR 2019: \$86,967,467  
MAR 2018: \$82,906,403

**4.8%**  
INCREASE



APR 2019: \$102,127,709  
APR 2018: \$95,148,259

**4.2%**  
INCREASE



YTD 2019: \$1,035,105,225  
YTD 2018: \$981,407,120

**5.5%**  
INCREASE



FY: JUL-JUN

### CONSUMER CONFIDENCE (0-150 scale)

	United States	New England
MAY	134.1	125.9
APR	129.2	113.5
MAR	124.2	111.0
FEB	131.4	118.5

### UNEMPLOYMENT as of June 4, 2019

Massachusetts:

**2.9%**

United States:

**3.6%**

### PRICES (YR OVER YR)

Wholesale food prices  
in April 2019:

**UP 0.6%**

Menu prices:

**UP 2.9%**

## ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL SMALL BUSINESS DAY ON BEACON HILL

On May 9th, the MRA partnered with other Massachusetts associations and chambers of commerce to host a Small Business Day on Beacon Hill. Members of the MRA, National Federation of Independent Business, the Retailers, Food Store, Package Store associations, Associated Industries of Massachusetts and many others joined together for an important day of advocacy. The morning featured a number of speakers, including sessions on legislative issues, health care, paid family leave compliance and a keynote address from Senate President Karen Spilka (pictured below). Afterwards, attendees headed up to Beacon Hill to meet directly with legislators. More than 200 business owners took time from their business to make the trip into Boston to discuss the impacts of a variety of legislative issues.



## MASSACHUSETTS PAID FAMILY LEAVE PROGRAM

Beginning in January of 2021, most workers in Massachusetts will be eligible to get up to 12 weeks of paid family leave and up to 20 weeks of paid medical leave. The program will be funded by premiums paid by employees, employers, and the self-employed. Contributions to the program will begin on **July 1, 2019**, and will be managed through the Department of Family and Medical Leave (DFML).

### How to comply with Paid Family and Medical Leave Law

As a Massachusetts employer, you're likely going to have new responsibilities under the Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) law. The state has prepared [a guide](#) to help you prepare for those responsibilities before the law's effective date of **July 1, 2019**.

### What are my responsibilities as an employer?

Beginning **July 1, 2019**, as an employer, you're responsible for:

- Reporting wages paid, payment for contract services rendered, and other information about your workforce.
- Determining contribution amounts for your workforce and for any contribution due from you as an employer where applicable.
- Making deductions to cover worker contributions from payments you make to your workforce, either as wages or as payments for services from Massachusetts 1099-MISC contractors.
- Notifying your workforce of the PFML law.

### How do I notify my employees about the new law?

You're required to notify your workforce about the state's PFML program, including its benefits and protections that apply to them. This notification includes:

- Displaying the [Paid Family and Medical Leave workplace poster](#) in a highly-visible location (click on poster on right for full size).
- Providing written notice of contributions, benefits, and workforce protections to Massachusetts W-2 employees and Massachusetts 1099-MISC contractors.
- Collecting signed acknowledgments of receipt of such notice from Massachusetts W-2 employees and Massachusetts 1099-MISC contractors.
- Sample written notice [here](#).

### How do I calculate the contribution?

Click [here](#) for the Massachusetts sample calculator.

### I already provide a leave benefit. Can I opt out?

The Department of Family and Medical Leave's private plan exemption process is now available for businesses in the Commonwealth with Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) plans offering benefits that meet or exceed those provided by the Commonwealth's PFML law.

The Private Plan Exemption Process is now available [here](#).

### When is the calculation due?

Employers remit contributions and any associate's payments through their MassTaxConnect account for the previous calendar quarter.

- Contributions for July - September will be due on Oct. 31, 2019.

**Notice of Benefits Available Under M.G.L. Chapter 175M**

**Paid Family and Medical Leave**

**Beginning on July 1, 2019:**

- Employers will deduct payroll contributions from a covered individual's wages or other earnings to fund PFML benefits.

**Beginning on January 1, 2021:**

- Covered individuals may be entitled to up to 20 weeks of paid medical leave in a benefit year if they have a serious health condition that incapacitates them from work.
- Covered individuals may be entitled to up to 12 weeks of paid family leave in a benefit year related to the birth, adoption, or foster care placement of a child, or because of a qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that a family member is on active duty or has been notified of an impending call to active duty in the Armed Forces.
- Covered individuals may be entitled to up to 26 weeks of paid family leave in a benefit year to care for a family member who is a covered service member with a serious health condition.

**Beginning on July 1, 2021:**

- Covered individuals may be entitled to up to 12 weeks of paid family leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition.

Covered individuals are eligible for no more than 26 total weeks, in the aggregate, of paid family and medical leave in a single benefit year.

**Who is a Covered Individual Under the Law?**

Generally, a worker qualifies as a covered individual and may be eligible for paid family and medical leave if:

- She is paid wages by a Massachusetts employer; or
- She resides in Massachusetts and is paid for contract services by a Massachusetts entity that is required to report payment for services on IRS Form 1099-MISC for more than 50 percent of its workforce; or
- She is a self-employed individual who resides in Massachusetts and chooses to opt-in to the program.

**Job Protection**

Generally, an employee who has taken paid family or medical leave must be restored to the employee's previous position or to an equal position, with the same status, pay, employment benefits, length-of-service credit, and seniority as of the date of leave.

*These job protections do not apply to contractors.*

**Weekly Benefits**

To fund PFML benefits, employers will deduct payroll contributions from a covered individual's wages or other earnings beginning on July 1, 2019. Covered individuals can apply for benefits beginning in January 2021 through the Department of Family and Medical Leave. A covered individual's average weekly earnings will determine his or her benefit amount, for a maximum weekly benefit of up to \$650.

**No Retaliation or Discrimination**

- It is unlawful for an employer to discriminate or retaliate against an employee for exercising any right to which she is entitled under the law.
- An employee or former employee who is discriminated or retaliated against for exercising rights under the law may, not more than three years after the violation occurs, institute a civil action in the superior court, and may be entitled to damages of as much as three times his or her lost wages.

**Private Plans**

If an employer offers employees paid family leave, medical leave, or both, with benefits that are at least as generous as those provided under the law, the employer may apply for an exemption from paying the contributions. Employees continue to be protected from discrimination and retaliation under the law even when an employer opts to provide paid leave benefits through a private plan.

**If you have questions or concerns about your Paid Family and Medical Leave rights, please contact:**

**MassPFML@Mass.gov or visit: <https://www.mass.gov/DFML>**

This notice must be posted in a conspicuous place on the employer's premises.

## HOW ALLERGIES ARE AFFECTING THE RESTAURANT BUSINESS MODEL



Of late, there have been multiple items in the news regarding allergic reactions at restaurants in Massachusetts. Most recently, a TV celebrity experienced an allergic reaction to a soup she assumed was free of her allergen. Luckily, she received treatment immediately and has since taken it as an opportunity to further increase food allergy awareness. This incident has helped educate the public that allergies aren't "just for kids". In fact, a very recent study suggests that almost 11% of adults have a true food allergy.

So, what does this mean for restaurateurs? In the past we have assumed 15-18 million Americans have a food allergy, with a bias toward children. The new information would put that number at over 30 million, children and adults. This would equate to roughly 650,000 food-allergic diners in Massachusetts alone. These are customers that hold a veto vote for their dining party, determining which restaurants their entire party will visit. These guests tend to patronize a smaller number of restaurants, those that have made them feel comfortable on previous visits. So, the upside for restaurants that best accommodate food-allergic guests is significant.

Massachusetts is already recognized as one of the most allergy-friendly states by diners across the country. Both independents and chains, upscale and casual dining, city and suburban have made positive changes to accommodate food-allergic guests and benefit their businesses. In fact, MRA Member Burtons Grill was once again ranked #1 nationally on AllergyEats' annual list of the Top 10 Allergy-Friendly Restaurant Chains in America. 110 Grill also made the list, while others like Not Your Average Joe's, Legal Sea Foods, and Davio's have developed great reputations.

All of the restaurants above have a strong rating on the MRA Member AllergyEats app and website. AllergyEats has become the leading guide to "allergy-friendly" restaurants nationwide. Restaurants earn a 1-5 rating (5 being the highest) for their allergy-friendliness based on the reviews of food-allergic diners nationwide.

Food allergies are clearly still on the rise, and unfortunately no cure is in sight. Therefore, taking steps to be allergy-friendly and actively welcoming this community is simply a smart business decision that can have a significant effect on your restaurant's profitability.

If you have an interest in learning more about the AllergyEats Partnership Program and how to better promote your restaurant(s) to the food allergy community, please send an email to [partnerships@allergyeats.com](mailto:partnerships@allergyeats.com).

## MASSACHUSETTS PAID FAMILY LEAVE PROGRAM *(continued from page 4)*

### How do I calculate my workforce?

Your total workforce includes:

- All Massachusetts W-2 employees (full-time, part-time, seasonal). A Massachusetts W-2 employee is anyone to whom you issue a W-2 form for performing services in Massachusetts.
- All Massachusetts 1099-MISC contractors. A Massachusetts 1099-MISC contractor is an individual who resides in Massachusetts for whom you are required to report payment for services on IRS Form 1099-MISC.

You'll always report on your total workforce numbers, but you're only responsible for submitting contributions on behalf of members of your workforce who are treated as covered individuals for the purposes of the PFML law.

### Who's a covered individual?

- W2 employees will always count as covered individuals
- 1099-MISC contractors count toward your total number of covered individuals only if they make up more than 50 percent of your total workforce (W-2 employees and 1099-MISC contractors combined)



**CHEF & OWNER:**  
Rodrigo Souza



## WE ARE THE MRA MEMBER PROFILE

**RESTAURANT:** Comeketo Brazilian Steakhouse

**CHEF:** Rodrigo Souza

**CITY:** Leominster

**FOUNDED:** 2009

**MEMBER SINCE:** 2018

**RESTAURANT SPECIALTY:** Brazilian Cuisine,  
Brazilian BBQ, Brazilian Steakhouse

**WEBSITE:** [www.comeketo.com](http://www.comeketo.com)

### WHY IS THE MRA IMPORTANT TO YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS?

MRA is important because it allows me to have access to information & resources that I wouldn't have otherwise. The MRA also allows me to network with other restaurateurs which is very powerful to see what issues, challenges and solutions they have had and learned from those experiences. We learn from one another.

## Fun Facts about Comeketo Brazilian Steakhouse

1. Ideal place for celebrations of big groups.
2. Provides a very unique experience through the Brazilian way of serving meats.
3. Meat lover's place.
4. Bubbly people work here.
5. We feature many craft drinks.
6. We are the only bar in Massachusetts with a crystal top and leadlights.
7. Very special seating - Presidential table.
8. Our restaurant has an open kitchen.
9. Your meats never get cold you always have a fresh slice coming of our state of the art rotisserie equipment.
10. Last but not least... we offer an all you can experience salad bar, sides & grilled meats from our state of the art rotisserie.

## THE 2019 ERNIE TREMBLAY SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS GALA



Wednesday, June 12, 2019, 6:00 PM

Registration: 6pm

*(Program & Dinner: starts promptly at 6:45pm)*

Danversport

161 Elliott Street, Danvers, MA 01923

Please join us on Wednesday, June 12th, 2019 along with Celebrity Host Billy Costa of NESN's Dining Playbook & KISS 108FM Radio, as we recognize the future stars of our industry and award them with well-deserved scholarships to help further their education!

Click [here](#) to register!

## THE 2019 ANNUAL MEETING & DINNER

*Annual  
Meeting  
& Dinner*

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

5:00 PM

UMass Club

1 Beacon Street - 32nd Floor  
Boston, MA 02108

*\$115.00 per person, includes all beverages, dinner,  
tax and gratuity.*

Reception and Election of Officers & Directors for July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020 followed by dinner with introductions of new Officers & Directors.

For directions & parking information  
please click [here](#).

## SAVE THE DATE: AUGUST 20TH 2019 MRA GOLF TOURNAMENT AT PINEHILLS GOLF CLUB

*Mark your calendar for **Tuesday, August 20th**  
for great golf, food and camaraderie ...you won't  
want to miss it!*

Pinehills Golf Club - 54 Clubhouse Dr, Plymouth, MA

**Cost- \$150 per golfer includes:**

Fabulous box lunch

Golf

Cart

Post tournament dinner

Awards

*...Stay tuned for more details!*





**MRAEF Scholarship Recipient**  
**VANESSA LARABEE**  
*Server, Island Kitchen*

I, Vanessa, have been a server for twenty years. I have been whistled at, snapped at, thrown up on, spilled on, insulted, and even had a knife thrown at my head. Why am I still a server? Well, because money is money. What I mean is...how hard is it to really take a food order? Well...you have to always have a smile, double check the order, make sure the kitchen is happy, refill the water, drop extra napkins to the table - oh wait, there is a spill, oh- you're allergic to gluten, there is an extra charge for coleslaw, no I am sorry you as an adult cannot order off the children's menu, no I don't remember what you ordered the last time you were here, you know the owner--so do I--I work here.

My mother was the first female captain at the Colony Hotel in Miami Beach in 1972. My mother then moved to Palm Beach to work at the Hilton where she met my father who was maître of the Breakers in Palm Beach. Summer on Nantucket, winter in Florida. On Nantucket, my mother was the Food and Beverage Director of Mad Hatter and my father was maître of the Chanticleer. Follow the money. Great food. Great wine. Wonderful service. Black tie. White gloves. Fine dining.

At the age of six, I wasn't ordering dinosaur shaped chicken nuggets but tuna tartar. Then for dinner--Beef Wellington accompanied by maple glaze roasted beets with goat cheese. Now dessert of--chocolate souffle. Overall, my parents taught me everything I know about the restaurant business. All the ins and outs. How to approach a table. How to talk to people. How to open a bottle of wine. How to up sell. How to pair the dessert with a port. How to end the night. But the most important thing that I will have to say that my parents taught me was to respect the kitchen. For without them you wouldn't be able to make your money. Acknowledge your staff. Always say please and thank you when you take things from the service line or window. The most important person in the business, The most important person in the restaurant is not the owner or the clients or the executive chef...it is your dishwasher. For they are the heart and soul of how that place runs! You always need clean dishes for food to be served. Make sure your dishwasher stays hydrated especially in the dinner rush for they cannot leave their station.

## "FAVE ACK RESTAURANT SUMMER 2016"

★★★★★ Aug 21, 2016



JamieK881 (10) Reviews  
 Albuquerque, New Mexico

AMAZING delicious, friendly, clean, good looking restaurant. It is my new go to restaurant on the island. Victoria and Vanessa and the whole gang make it easy to return again and again and again. Good wine, cocktails and the food is perfect everytime it comes out. I have only had dinner, but am heading for brunch today. I am glad ISLAND KITCHEN is here. I hope everybody has a great winter.

## "Vanessa Superstar of waitresses"

★★★★★ May 30, 2016



MarieC541 (96) Reviews  
 Boston, Massachusetts

We went for Breakfast at 9a.m on Sunday, we selected our cocktails not realizing we would have to wait until 11 to buy alcohol. Vanessa had a great sense of humor about telling us this.

She was busy but managed her customers very calmly, checking in if we needed anything, bringing coffee refills.

Food was delicious, two of us had omelettes, one had panko crusted eggs Benedict.

Service was very fast, very accommodating on changes to menu items.

Definitely worth a visit. If you are not interest in alcohol early is not as crowded and no wait.



## SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION FOR RESTAURANTS

Learn what sexual harassment is, how it impacts all workers, and how to respond in ways that enforce a safe work environment.

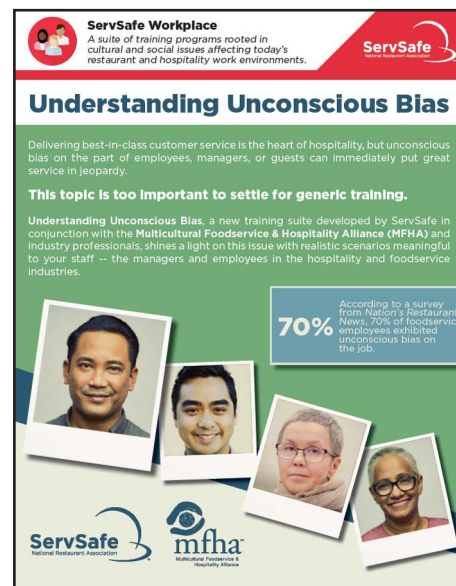
Click [here](#) for more information on this online course.



## UNDERSTANDING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN RESTAURANTS, EMPLOYEE

This is an interactive program that sheds light on the existence of unconscious bias, the impact on individuals and the workplace.

Click [here](#) for more information on this online course.



## 2019 SERVSAFE TRAINING SCHEDULE

### SERVSAFE MANAGER

DATE	LOCATION	TIME
August 14th & 28th	MRA	4-8pm
September 16th & 30th	MRA	4-8pm
October 7th & 21st	Kowloon	4-8pm
November 6th & 20th	MRA	4-8pm

### SERVSAFE ALCOHOL

June 18th	MRA	3-7pm
July 30th	MRA	4-8pm
August 26th	MRA	4-8pm
September 11th	MRA	4-8pm
December 18th	MRA	4-8pm

### SERVSAFE RECERTIFICATION

July 17th	MRA	4-8pm
October 15th	MRA	4-8pm
December 9th	MRA	4-8pm



To sign up for training, call  
(508) 573-4180

### CLASS LOCATIONS:

#### MRA:

160 East Main St., Suite 2  
Westborough, MA

#### KOWLOON:

948 Broadway, Saugus, MA

## CHOKESAVING COURSES AVAILABLE AT THE MRA



### UPCOMING CLASSES

Thursday, June 13, 2019  
Thursday July 11, 2019  
Thursday, August 8, 2019  
Thursday, September 12, 2019  
Thursday, October 10, 2019  
Thursday, November 14, 2019  
All classes are 10-11am.

### CLASS LOCATION:

Massachusetts Restaurant  
Association  
160 East Main Street, Suite 2  
Westborough, MA 01581

Click [HERE](#) to register.

# WELCOME NEW MRA MEMBERS!

## FOOD & BEVERAGE OPERATORS

**255 Club Inc.**  
255 Chelmsford St.  
Lowell, MA 01851  
(978) 761-8478  
Sean Gannem

**Brick & Beam**  
705 Adams St.  
Quincy, MA 02169  
(617) 481-5434  
Bret Kelly

**Del Frisco's Double Eagle  
Steakhouse Back Bay Boston**  
888 Boylston St, Suite 053  
Boston, MA 02199  
(617) 259-1568  
Amarr Reidd

**Exchange St Station**  
258 exchange St.  
Chicopee, MA 01013  
(413) 331-2290  
Tyron Zaitshik

**George's Café of Dracut Inc.**  
79 Honora Ave.  
Dracut, MA 01826  
(978) 957-9808  
Blanche Mahalaris

**Osteria La Civetta**  
133 Main St.  
Falmouth, MA 02540 2763  
Ms. Sara Toselli  
(508) 524-5466

**Rivershed**  
42 Williamsburg Lane  
Scituate, MA 02066  
(617) 596-3740  
Kara Tondorf

**The 9th Monarch**  
634 State Rd. Unit G  
North Dartmouth, MA 02747  
(774) 202-7392  
Miguel Ruiz

## BUSINESS PARTNERS

**JF Tobin Integrity Floor Care**  
PO Box 421  
Mendon, MA 01756  
(508) 400-1481  
Jim Tobin  
*Flooring (Retail)*

**Quinsigamond Hospitality &  
Recreation Mangement**  
128 Providence St.  
Worcester, MA 01604 5432  
(508) 799-8068  
Pat Hutchinson  
*School*

**Walker Development &  
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5 Mt Royal Ave., Suite 40  
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Nine 99**  
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Bank**

**Piantedosi**  
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**Sprague**

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come from  
**Sysco**

**Twinbrook**  
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**US WEALTH**  
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Massachusetts Restaurant Association  
160 East Main Street, Suite 2, Westborough, MA 01581  
Phone: (508) 303-9905 [www.themassrest.org](http://www.themassrest.org)

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Check out the MRA LinkedIn Group