

May 22, 2020

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Governor John Bel Edwards,

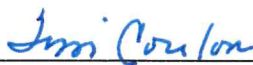
On behalf of the 18,000 businesses in Jefferson Parish, we write asking for your consideration of relaxing the 25% occupancy rule on restaurants, retail, and other large venues. We believe that people are not going to patronize businesses where they do not feel safe, so it seems punitive to keep an artificial cap on the business itself. During this transition, business operators now more than ever will have to prove to clientele that their establishments are safe. If they do, customers will return and thus the establishment should be rewarded. If they do not make their customers feel comfortable by taking the necessary measures, customers will not return and therefore the establishment penalized.

We urge and request that you support Amendment #2206 by Representative Lance Harris on HCR 73 by Speaker Schexnayder. The amendment requests that you amend section GG1BI of Proclamation Number 58JBE2020 to mirror the White House Guidelines for Opening Up America Again; "LARGE VENUES (e.g., sit-down dining, movie theater, sporting venues, places of worship) can operate under strict physical distancing protocols."

Restaurants are the core of Louisiana's hospitality industry and culture and they are closing their doors each day due to their inability to operate during the COVID-19 epidemic. Since Louisiana has satisfied the Gating Criteria for Phase One as outlined by the White House Guidelines for Opening Up America Again, we believe the best opportunity for the restaurants to recover is to trust the business owners to comply with strict social distancing guidelines to keep their employees and customers safe, instead of 25% occupancy standard (including staff).



Todd P. Murphy
President, Jefferson Chamber



Tim Coulon
Executive Director,
Jefferson Business Council



Jerry Bologna
President & CEO, JEDCO

P.S. Thank you for your consideration and subsequent revision of your order to open interior shopping malls last week. We understand the important balance of public health and economic health and thought this was a sound decision.

cc: Patrick Page Cortez, Senate President
Clay Schexnayder, Speaker of the House