



February 11, 2021

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker
Governor
State of Illinois
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Governor Pritzker,

On behalf of the Illinois Restaurant Association (IRA) and its members throughout the state, I am writing to reiterate our request for priority access to COVID-19 vaccines for our frontline restaurant and foodservice workforce in Phase 1B along with other essential workers.

Pre-pandemic, the IRA represented more than 25,000 restaurants and foodservice outlets across the state, employing approximately 594,000 people. Restaurants are the cornerstone of every community throughout the state, and we are the state's largest private sector employer. Yet due to COVID-19, more than 124,000 Illinoisans in our industry have lost their job, and we anticipate that 20% of restaurants will close permanently.

Restaurants are a vital and essential part of the way families are fed. Restaurant and foodservice workers are important components of the food supply chain and, thus, an integral part of the state's critical infrastructure segment. Prioritization of these workers will be a key intervention to help them remain healthy to ensure continued operations and continuity of the supply chain. Our industry is proud to fulfill these essential responsibilities, but we must protect our selfless workers who continue to risk their personal safety to feed and comfort our state. As the vaccination process continues, accelerating the vaccine for foodservice employees in Phase 1B will help keep these vital workers on-the-job and supporting their communities.

For the reasons stated above, we respectfully request that you move the restaurant and foodservice workforce into Phase 1B for vaccine distribution.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to our continued work together to ensure the health and safety of our workforce.

Sincerely,

Sam Toia
President & CEO
Illinois Restaurant Association



Cc: The Honorable Emanuel "Chris" Welch
The Honorable Jim Durkin
The Honorable Don Harmon
The Honorable Dan McConchie