



March 12, 2020

*The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224*

To the Honorable Governor Andrew Cuomo:

As President and CEO of the New York State Restaurant Association, I am writing to you on behalf of the thousands of brick-and-mortar restaurants — and their employees — that we represent all across New York. We need your assistance during this ongoing COVID-19 crisis. We applaud the proactive steps you and your administration have taken in the face of this growing crisis, and we firmly agree that the health and safety of our employees is the number one priority.

It is no secret that the brick-and-mortar small businesses across the state are suffering and struggling to find ways to make ends meet. Restaurants are facing a seemingly inevitable downturn as government gathering restrictions drive self-isolation. While we fully understand gathering restrictions are a needed step to ensure containment of the virus, our members — and the hundreds of thousands of hospitality employees in the state — rely on people leaving their homes and going out to eat. For example, we have member restaurants who have seen a 55-percent decrease in their business, and if they were to take on any additional costs they may not be able to stay in business. For some restaurants, it may be impossible to keep their doors open.

We are asking the state to develop a program to provide the hospitality industry in the state with some relief as they weather this impossible situation. Some possible avenues of relief include;

- Preventing price gouging by implementing temporary delivery fee caps. Food delivery apps will be critical for many, and we must protect consumers who will rely on these services during this crisis;
- Extending the window for restaurants to make payments on COVID-19-related costs they are incurring, including paid sick leave;
- Extending the terms of payments to alcohol distributors from 60 to 90 days;
- Enacting a 90-day extension on paying monthly sales tax;
- Making available no interest loans to those who have seen a dramatic decrease in business;
- Eliminating penalties for late payment of business and property taxes;
- Extending the cure period for various violations facing businesses during the crisis; and

- Educating the public about how it is safe for patrons to continue to go about their normal business and to patronize their local community brick-and-mortar restaurants and bars.

These are just a few of the ideas our members have put forth to try and help them through this extremely difficult time. Again, we cannot overstate how many restaurants are facing a dire future right now. We want to stay open and keep employees on the payroll, but for some that will not be possible if this pandemic, and the associated quarantines, continue for even the next month. We urge your assistance.

Sincerely,

Melissa Fleischut

President & CEO, NYS Restaurant Association