

December 16, 2020

Honorable Governor Janet T. Mills  
1 State House Station  
Augusta ME 04333

RE: Vaccination Classification for Maine's hospitality workers

Dear Governor Mills,

Thank you for your ongoing leadership through one of the most challenging periods in Maine's long 200-year history. Back in March none of us – not even the science experts - could have predicted the devastation that the pandemic would cause to our communities, our people, our businesses, and Maine's precious quality of life.

Representing the state's second largest private sector employer, we are keenly aware of the stress and panic that our members are enduring daily. Hundreds of restaurants and inns have already closed, many permanently. Tens of thousands of hospitality professionals are out of work. Personal financial equity built over a lifetime, in some cases generations, has been lost. Many others, including some well-known establishments, are teetering on collapse and operating with skeleton crews.

Our goal is to help as many as possible survive until better times arrive, and prepare the industry, proactively, starting now.

While we have occasionally disagreed on some applications of your executive orders, HospitalityMaine has been in complete agreement on the need of restaurants and hotels to keep employees and guests safe. We helped write the first guidelines back in April; in May and June we conceived the concept and, along with our partners at the Maine Community College System, wrote and distributed four Covid Readiness micro-credential courses for frontline hospitality



workers. Over 4500 of our employees passed the course and received their certifications.

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45 Melville Street, Augusta, Maine 04330

**I write today to ask that you include these hospitality workers in the earliest phase possible of Maine's Covid 19 vaccination roll out.**

Our public facing staff are a critical piece of the state's food infrastructure and a key part of ensuring the health of Maine people. Prior to the pandemic restaurants accounted for slightly more than grocery stores for the total household spend on food (51% to 49%, according to recent National Restaurant Association figures). Similar to grocery workers, our employees are in close contact with guests and customers in order to perform their duties. They deserve the same consideration in the vaccination process.

For a successful future we need to build the safest and cleanest hospitality industry in America, just as Maine was a leader in keeping down the Covid infection numbers this year. While my responsibility is in hospitality, I believe that Maine's economy will emerge successfully if we proactively plan for this. Vaccinating our huge hospitality workforce as soon as feasible will signal the start of our rebuild. This cannot come soon enough the Maine's hardest hit sector of the economy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Steven W. Hewins  
President and CEO

CC: Commissioner Heather Johnson  
Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew  
HospitalityMaine Board of Directors

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Here are some important reasons why:

- In 2019 household spend for food was split between 49% grocery stores, 51% restaurants
- Hotels throughout Maine have been open during the entire pandemic safely housing everyone from displaced homeless residents to frontline essential workers and visitors during our peak season.