

Federal relief for Maine's restaurants and inns on the way

\$377 billion in assistance for small businesses have major impact for Maine's hospitality sector

AUGUSTA, Maine — The emergency \$2 trillion stimulus package, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, expected to pass the House Friday, is the first step to help Maine's hospitality sector return to viability.

Since Maine's no-dine-in order was announced one weeks ago, the hospitality sector has been paralyzed here and across the country as the outbreak surges. A key section of the largest bail out in U.S. history provides \$377 billion in cash flow assistance through 100% federally guaranteed loans to small businesses during this emergency.

To help workers who have already been laid off, the program can return employees onto payrolls through loans, grants, unemployment assistant and business interruption and disaster insurance.

Maine's hotel and restaurant trade group, HospitalityMaine, rallied its members to demand relief from thousands of lost room nights and restaurant reservations, advanced room reservations and dwindling walk-in traffic. Two hundred restaurants, inns and tourism-centric businesses sent a letter to Collins seeking help.

"The beauty of this is it covers employer and employee at the same time," said HospitalityMaine's CEO Steve Hewins.

The association's government affairs officer Greg Dugal worked with Maine's legislative leaders in the Senate, specifically Senator Collins' office, to pass this act.

"This landmark legislation is the lifeline that Maine's inns, restaurants and hotels have been waiting for and will be our saving grace for the foreseeable future," said Dugal, adding "the bill is not perfect, but it will help many Maine hospitality businesses."

Sen. Susan Collins, a key player on the Bipartisan Small Business Task Force, pushed for emergency economic relief for Maine's small businesses on the verge of going under. The influx of cash should fill many gaps.

Said Collins, "My \$377 billion small business economic relief plan will help make sure that businesses that were thriving before the pandemic as well as their employees are able to make it through this crisis. Partners like HospitalityMaine have helped to mobilize Maine's restaurants, hotels, and other businesses to raise awareness about why this aid is so urgently needed."

To Hewins, "Collins understood both the needs of small business and their employees in this innovative approach to recovery," said HM's CEO Steve Hewins. "She accepted our input and clearly heard the pleas from hundreds of our members who signed on to our letter of support."