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April 6, 2020

Mr. Gary McDowell, Director
Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development
P.O. Box 30017
Lansing, Michigan 48909

RE: Food Service Fees - sent via email

Dear Director McDowell:

While working with restaurants on economic disaster assistance, it has come to the attention of the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce that many of the restaurants currently facing hardships are receiving notices for renewal of MDARD food service licenses.

We are working with restaurant business owners who are very much concerned about making payroll, loan payments and other financial obligations during the COVID-19 crisis. Many of our area businesses typically take out a line of credit from their banks for the off-season and pay back loans during the typically lucrative summer months. There is a great deal of uncertainty now about when business may resume, and it is quite possible that 2020 will be a year without a northern Michigan summer tourism season.

Notwithstanding the need for appropriate regulation for the public health and safety and also fully supporting Governor Whitmer's current "Stay at Home" executive order to "flatten the curve". We would like to ask on behalf of our business members that you consider deferring food service license fees for 12 months. These businesses need licenses and understand the necessity of health standards, however, a large number may find it difficult to pay these license fees in 2020.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stacie Bytwork
President

Cc: Governor Gretchen Whitmer
State Senator Curt VanderWall
State Representative Jack O'Malley
Poppy Hernandez, Office of the Governor