

The Honorable Larry Hogan
Governor of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1925



September 1, 2020

Dear Governor Hogan,

On behalf of Maryland's restaurant and foodservice industry, we would like to thank you for your leadership during this pandemic. We are encouraged by the decreasing metrics of COVID and the positive direction the State has taken as we move forward. Our industry has been encouraged by your willingness to keep Maryland open for business and we believe that now is the time to take the next steps.

The restaurant industry continues to struggle to survive this pandemic. By the end of this year, as many as 40 percent of all restaurants could close permanently. This is an alarming number that will impact every community across the State if actions are not taken soon enough.

As the COVID positivity rates in every jurisdiction are under five percent, the face mask wearing mandate remains in effect and has made a significant difference, and hospitalizations continue to decrease, – we ask that the following restrictions on our industry be lifted:

- Self-service buffets should be permitted to reopen under the guidelines developed by the Restaurant Association of Maryland in cooperation with the Maryland Department of Health. Buffets remain the only segment of the restaurant industry that have not reopened, yet have a plan for operational guidelines that will allow them to do so safely.
- Allow for barriers between booth seating, rather than the current mandate to close every other booth. Local health departments will be able to monitor and approve such barriers as acceptable in accordance with the intent of social distancing and safety. Opening these now-empty booths for seating will help restaurants accommodate more customers safely. These barriers are already permitted in schools as part of *Maryland's Recovery Plan for Education*. Therefore, such barriers should also be permitted in restaurants.
- Increase the indoor capacity restriction to 75 percent. Many restaurants are very concerned that, with summer ending, cooler weather will eliminate the opportunity for outdoor seating. Restaurants will be unable to survive if forced to continue restricting indoor seating to 50-percent capacity with no feasible outdoor seating option. Increasing capacity in restaurants will be the most impactful way to reduce the potential number of permanent restaurant closures.
- Establish liability protections for foodservice businesses and their employees regarding COVID. Foodservice businesses are still very concerned that they are at risk to potential COVID-related lawsuits while following CDC and State guidelines.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these steps in more detail and hope that these measures can be implemented as part of Phase Two of Maryland's recovery as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Restaurant Association of Maryland Board of Directors

Kelly	O'Brien	Madrones - Frederick
Bob	Garner	Glory Days Grill – statewide locations
Will	Robinson	Ledo Pizza System – statewide locations
Tricia	Hudson	Hudson Coastal - Fulton
Derrick	Purcell	Ida B's Table - Baltimore
Kevin	Keller	Clyde's Restaurant Group – Chevy Chase & Rockville
Tom	Knorr	Evolution Craft Brewing - Salisbury
Nicole	Youse	Crossroads Bistro - Edgemere
Clare	Frey	White Oak Tavern - Columbia
Kenneth	MacFawn	White Rabbit Gastropub - Frederick
Kyle	Algaze	Iron Rooster – Baltimore & Annapolis
Naijha	Wright-Brown	Land of Kush - Baltimore
Geoff	Trout	IHOP - College Park
Michelle	Torres	Phillips Seafood Restaurants – Baltimore & Ocean City
Ashish	Alfred	Duck Duck Goose - Bethesda
Larry	Metz	The Wellwood - Charlestown
Andy	Attman	Acme Paper & Supply
Bryan	Kight	Ecolab
Suzanne	Spack	Sysco Baltimore
Bryan	Bernstein	Saval Foodservice
John	Hinkle	HUB International
Emily	Martin	EMR