Dear Governor Lamont and Leaders of the Connecticut General Assembly:

As you know, restaurant owners and staff from our association have met continually with yourselves and other elected officials in search of compromise on issues pertaining to vetoed House Bill 5001. Those conversations have been substantive, productive, and abundantly respectful on all sides. We’re confident that a mutually agreeable path forward is now within reach.

We’re writing to you today for two reasons. First, we want to sincerely thank you for the time and serious attention that has been given to these issues by each of you, by the Labor Committee Chairs and Ranking Members, and by your respective staff. Second, on behalf of Connecticut’s more than 8,000 restaurants -- the vast majority of which are local, small businesses -- we want to respectfully urge you to take these matters up as part of this year’s planned special legislative session, and to not let them wait until 2020 to be resolved.

The reason for our urgency is simple. Connecticut’s restaurants and their 119,000 local employees have been living in an uncertain regulatory environment for some time, and creating stability in this sector will only benefit our state economy. Conversely, continuing down a path of instability will only be to the detriment of state jobs and state revenues in the months ahead. After all, in 2018 alone Connecticut’s local restaurant’s combined for more than $8.2 billion in sales. It’s estimated that each dollar spent in local table-service restaurants contributes $1.77 to our state economy.

In other words, restaurants are key drivers of Connecticut’s economy. What’s also true is that, even for very successful restaurants, our margins can be very fluid month-to-month, or even week-to-week. Changes to our bottom line can mean the difference between keeping our doors open, and shutting down. It can be the difference between employing 10, or 20, or 30 people... and employing none. The current situation is causing real uncertainty in our industry, and we fear it will soon have a direct negative impact on our state economy.

As restaurant owners we understand we have to follow the rules laid out by state and federal government. What we’re searching for is a clearer and more predictable system upon which we and our employees can rely. The fact is, neither us or any of you as state leaders created our current legal and regulatory structure in its entirety. Many of the statutes governing
these laws were put on the books decades ago, and have been tweaked and updated many times since. And the regulations and practices for enforcing these laws were crafted and standardized under previous gubernatorial administrations.

We believe this is an opportunity. An opportunity for you and us to create a more sensible, permanent, and fair regulatory environment for 8,000 restaurants across Connecticut.

Finally, we want to be very clear: we want this new system to be fair and workable for our employees as well. To start, we absolutely want our employees to make more than the minimum wage. Right now, the average tipped employee in Connecticut makes $25 per hour, deservedly taking home much more than the state’s current minimum wage of $10.10. We know how critical our employees are to the success of our businesses, and we want them to be well-paid and happy in their jobs.

Together, we can create a balance that works for these employees and for restaurant owners. We can ensure that servers and bartenders continue to earn well in excess of minimum wage, without asking small businesses to pay additional wages to employees who already make well over the minimum wage, on average. This balance will allow more restaurants to stay in business, employing more Connecticut residents, and further bolstering our economy.

In closing, let us stress again how greatly Connecticut restaurant owners appreciate the willingness of each of you to keep your doors open for continued dialogue on this topic. Working together, we can create a new system based on predictability and certainty for thousands of businesses and their many employees across our state.

Thank you for your continued attention to these issues.

Sincerely,

Dan Meiser – CRA Chairman
Oyster Club (Mystic) | Engine Room (Mystic) | Grass & Bone (Mystic)

Tim Adams & Jim Welch
J. Timothy’s Taverne (Plainville)

Tyler Anderson & Al Aurrichio
Millwright’s (Simsbury) | Hamilton Park (New Haven) | High George (New Haven) | Porron & Pina (Hartford)

Steven Antonio
Antonio’s (Simsbury)

Wayne Barclay
Texas Roadhouse (Waterbury)

Phil Barnett & Mike Hamlin
Wood-N-Tap (Farmington, Hamden, Hartford, Newington, Orange, Rocky Hill, Southington, Vernon & Wallingford) | Que Whiskey Kitchen (Southington)

Keith Beaulieu
The Main Pub (Manchester)

Kenneth Berry
Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana (Danbury, Fairfield, Manchester, New Haven, Uncasville, West Hartford & Waterbury)

James Bitzonis
Buffalo Wild Wings (Danbury, Milford, North Haven & Stamford)

Linda Brady
Vito’s Pizzeria (Wethersfield) | V’s Trattoria (Hartford)

Jeremy Brignolo
The Village Restaurant (Litchfield)

Val Capobianco
Brazzi’s Italian Restaurant (New Haven)

Vinnie Carbone
Carbone’s (Hartford) | Carbone’s Kitchen (Bloomfield) | Carbon’s Prime (Rocky Hill)

George Chatzopoulos
Chip’s Family Restaurants (Fairfield, Orange, Southbury, Southington, Trumbull & Wethersfield) | Balos (West Hartford)

George Colli
Chicago Sam’s (Cromwell & Enfield)

Jerry & Theresa Collins
Arch Street Tavern (Hartford)

Kevin Cottle
Fire at the Ridge (Middlefield)
Kevin Conroy  
Rowayton Seafood Restaurant (Norwalk)

William DaSilva & Dave Rutigliano  
SBC Restaurant & Beer Bar (Milford) | Local Kitchen & Beer Bar (Branford, Fairfield & Norwalk) | Sitting Duck Tavern (Stratford & Trumbull)

Clark Davis  
Chili’s Grill & Bar (Bristol, Cromwell, Danbury, East Haven, Glastonbury, Lisbon, Manchester, Milford, Montville, New Britain, New London, Newington, Shelton, Simsbury, Southington, Wallingford, Waterbury & Windsor)

Colette Deacy  
Tiernan’s Bar & Restaurant (Stamford)

Ralph Deluono, Thomas Daddona & Constantine Kotsafits  
Roma Ristorante (Oakville)

Candace Devendittis  
Dev’s Bistro (New London)

Jordan Dikegoros  
J Restaurant Bar (Hartford)

Fred Dressler  
Tapas (Bloomfield)

Mike Farber  
MiKro (Hamden) | TexiKo Tequila Bar (Hamden)

Andrew Field  
Noah’s Restaurant (Stonington)

Kimberly Foster  
Harvest Café and Bakery (Simsbury)

Chris Giotsas  
Joe Pizza (Canton & Simsbury)

Doug Grabe  
Little Pub (Fairfield, Greenwich, Old Saybrook, Stratford & Wilton)

Billy Grant  
Restaurant Bricco (West Hartford) | Bricco Trattoria (Glastonbury)

Andrew Gutt  
Cafémantic (Willimantic)

Chris, Martha, Elizabeth & Patrick Henney  
River: A Waterfront Restaurant & Bar (Wethersfield)

David Hutchings  
Outback Steakhouse (Enfield)

Kevin Fitzsimmons  
Prime One Eleven (Trumbull) | Barra Italian Street Kitchen (Shelton)

Paul & Olivia Formica  
Flanders Fish Market (East Lyme)

Al Gamble & Shawn Skehan  
Plan B Burger Bar (Fairfield, Glastonbury, Milford, Simsbury, Stamford & West Hartford) | Butchers & Bakers (Farmington) | The Half-Door (Hartford) | Tisane Euro-Asian Cafe (Hartford)

Joel Gargano  
Grano Arso (Chester)

Rodney Green  
Olde Tymes Restaurant (Norwich)

Raymond Harper  
Maggie McFly’s (Brookfield, Glastonbury, Manchester, Middlebury & Southbury)

Tom Hayden  
Sweet Evalina’s Stand (Woodstock)

Arthur Hetrick  
Farrell’s Restaurant (Portland)

Stephanie Hayes-Houilan  
Water Street Café (Stonington)

Brian & Barry Jessurun  
85 Main (Putnam) | Dog Lane Café (Storrs) | Fenton River Grill (Mansfield) | Vanilla Bean Café (Pomfret)

Steve Kassman  
Rein’s New York Style Deli (Vernon)

David Kreyemborg  
Outback Steakhouse (Shelton)

Lucille Kiley & Allison Nasin  
The Captain Daniel Packer Inne (Mystic)

Jon Kodama  
Go Fish (Mystic) | Steak Loft (Mystic) | Dock & Dine (Old Saybrook) | Breakwater (Stonington)

Angelo Koukoularis  
Stonington Pizza Palace (Stonington)
Kurt Kruczek & Jason Welch  
Naples Pizza (Farmington) | Fork & Fire (Farmington)

Tim LaBant  
Schoolhouse at Cannondale (Wilton)

Harry Longinidis  
Angie’s Pizza (Mystic)

Dennis Longo  
USS Chowder Pot IV (Hartford)

Francesco Lulaj  
La Foresta Restaurant (Killingworth)

Jo-Ann Makovitzky  
Community Table Restaurant (Warren)

Bogdan Malinowski  
Staropolska (New Britain)

Michael & Frank Marchetti  
Applausi Osteria (Old Greenwich) | Columbus Park (Stamford) | Tarantino Restaurant (Westport)

Don Mastronardi  
Dry Dock Bar & Grill (Norwalk) | Dry Dock at Silvermine Golf Club (Norwalk)

Martti Matheson  
Buffalo Wild Wings (Manchester, Southington, Waterbury, Waterford, Wethersfield & Windsor)

Jamie & Cheryl McDonald  
Bear’s Restaurant Group | Blind Pig Pizza (Hartford) | The Stack – Bear’s Smokehouse BBQ (New Haven)

Randy McNamara & Todd Stigliano  
Geno’s Grille (Storrs) | Geno’s Pub (Uncasville)

Bill Middleton  
Jealous Monk (Mystic)

Eric Molloy  
Lola’s Bistro & Grill (Plainville)

David Noad  
Camille’s Wood Fired Pizza (Tolland) | Oakland Pizza Co. (South Windsor)

Charlie Noyes  
99 Restaurants (Bristol, Cromwell, Danbury, Enfield, Glastonbury, Groton, Dayville, Norwich, Stratford, Torrington, Vernon & Wallingford)

Scott O’Reilly  
Smokey O’Grady’s (East Lyme)

Steve Parker  
Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse (Newington)

John Perry, Rick Gagliastri & Steve Lyon  
Applebee’s (Danbury, Groton, Mansfield, Orange, Plainville & Torrington)

Anthony Pirraglia  
Oak & Almond (Norwalk)

Brian Phelps  
Toad’s Place (New Haven)

Dorjan Puka, Mira Puka & Scott Miller  
Artisanal Burger Company (Manchester) | Avert (West Hartford) | Treva (West Hartford) | Zohara (West Hartford)

Denise Raap  
The Village Restaurant (Litchfield)

Brenda Reilly  
Baci Restaurant & Bar (Cromwell)

Rich Riccitelli, Peter Clardiello & Shawn Reilly  
Eli’s on Whitney (Hamden) | Eli’s Brick Oven Pizza (Hamden) | Eli’s Tavern (Milford) | Eli’s Branford (Branford)

Nino Ribeiro  
Basta Trattoria (New Haven)

Scott Riley  
Cambridge House Brew Pub (Granby)

Andrew Rizzo  
Salute Restaurant (Hartford)

Jeffrey Robert  
The Dublin (East Hampton)

Manuel Romero  
Olea (New Haven)

Rich Rosenthal & Steven Abrams  
Max A Mia (Avon) | Max Burger (West Hartford) | Max Downtown (Hartford) | Max Fish (Glastonbury) | Max Oyster Bar (West Hartford) | Savoy Pizzeria (West Hartford) | Trumbull Kitchen (Hartford)

Jason Sobocinski  
Olmo (New Haven)

Ami & Mark Shadle  
G-Zen (Durham)
Aura Showah
Widow Browns Café (Danbury)

Kleber, Nube, Vicente & Wilson Siguenza
Cava Wine Bar & Restaurant (New Canaan) | 55 Wine Bar & Wood Grille (Fairfield) | Harvest Wine Bar & Restaurant (Greenwich, New Haven, West Hartford & Westport) | Scena Wine Bar & Restaurant (Darien) | South Bay (Greenwich & New Haven)

Drew Stichter
Hidden Valley Eatery (Washington)

Matt Storch
Match Restaurant (Norwalk)

James Stowers
Litchfield Saltwater Grille (Litchfield)

Bob & Danita Sulick
Mulberry Street (Manchester)

Anthony Sullo
Joey Garlic’s (Manchester & Newington) | Joey’s Pizza Pie (West Hartford)

Avi Szapiro
Roia (New Haven)

Stephen Tagliatela
Fresh Salt at the Saybrook Point Inn (Old Saybrook)

Bill Taibe
Jesup Hall (Westport) | Kawa Ni (Westport) | The Whelk (Westport)

Jason Teal
Bombs Wings & Rice Bar (Hamden)

Michael Tiscia
Michael’s Trattoria (Wallingford)

Nick Vamvilis
Maine Fish Market Restaurant (East Windsor)

Catherine Vollweiler
Sharpe Hill Vineyard Restaurant (Pomfret)

Jean-Pierre Vuillermet, Robin Vuillermet & Christina Fitzgerald
Bar Bouchée (Madison) | Union League Café (New Haven)

Jamie Ward, Kenneth Ward, Jonathan Martin, Richard Bouvier & James Tyler Southwick
Flora (West Hartford) | Rooster Co. (Newington)

Helmar Wolf
Abigail’s (Simsbury) | Market Grille (Manchester) | Mill on the River (South Windsor) | Republic (Bloomfield) | Republic at the Linden (Hartford)

Adam Zakka, Remze Zakka & Albert DeAngelis
Eastend (Greenwich) | Mediterraneo (Greenwich & Norwalk) | Sole (New Canaan) | Terra (Greenwich & Danbury)