

May 13, 2020

*The Honorable Ned Lamont
Governor, State of Connecticut
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106*



To the Honorable Governor Ned Lamont & Connecticut Reopen Advisory Committee:

Thank you once again for all you are doing to lead our state through the COVID-19 crisis. None of us could have predicted how completely our lives would be upended this year, both at home and in our places of business. And yet, thanks to the hard work of state leaders and many brave personnel throughout our local healthcare system, Connecticut appears to be on the right side of the curve and ready to begin a thoughtful and gradual “reopening” in the weeks ahead.

As leaders of industry associations and companies who supply our restaurant and hospitality industry, we greatly appreciate that your Connecticut Reopen Advisory Committee includes representatives from these critical industries, which collectively represent more than ten percent of our state economy. We know you agree that Connecticut can and will find a path forward that protects public health while also keeping this large sector of economy from being permanently dismantled.

To that end, we write to collectively voice our confusion and concern over recently announced recommendations from the Advisory Group that would keep restaurants from offering any indoor dining whatsoever during the initial phases of reopening. We believe that limited, safe indoor dining is possible, and ask that a 50 percent capacity be allowed indoors beginning June 3rd, 14 days after other businesses are allowed to begin some operation indoors. Doing so would keep many local restaurants from going out of business in the weeks ahead.

As malls, hair salons and others are allowed to gradually begin indoor service, as they should be, it makes sense restaurants would also be allowed some limited indoor service. We understand that each business setting is unique and presents unique challenges. In restaurants, masks must be removed to eat. However, unlike some other settings that may be allowed indoor service, at restaurants there is no physical touching between staff and customers, and the area a customer uses can be completely cleaned after each use.

Right now, throughout the state restaurants are serving customers via takeout, curbside, and delivery, utilizing increased health and safety practices at every turn. And they are ready to do more -- plans the industry have put forward would require all restaurants to keep tables at least six feet apart, monitor the health of all staff prior to each shift, keep hand sanitizer at every entrance, and implement even more stringent rules for sanitizing tables, surfaces, menus, and more after every use.

We understand why some outside the restaurant industry might believe that outdoor dining will allow restaurants to stay in business during this time, but it simply isn't true. Most restaurants do not have available outdoor space, and many lack even available parking areas that could be theoretically converted. While some additional outdoor dining should absolutely be allowed, assuming it is a solution for these businesses is unfortunately a false hope. Many restaurants are already failing -- hundreds of more will permanently shutter in the weeks ahead if we don't give them a chance to prove they can begin serving the public safely indoors.

To be very clear, we know the state cannot return to normal overnight. We are not asking for full indoor dining, but instead a restricted, socially-distanced phase-in, just as other indoor businesses would be allowed to do under current plans. Thank you for your consideration of our perspective, and thank you again for all you and your administration are doing during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

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ADJ of Stamford
(Stamford)

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(Groton)

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Aitro Financial Group
(Cheshire)

Dave Heller
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Back East Brewery
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BADSONS Beer Co.
(Derby)

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Black Pond Brews
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Tom Kachmarck
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(New Haven)

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