



September 24, 2019

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

The Honorable Martin Looney
Senate President Pro Tempore
Legislative Office Building, Room 3300
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Bob Duff
Senate Majority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 3300
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Len Fasano
Senate Minority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 3402
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Joe Aresimowicz
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building, Room 4105
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Matt Ritter
House Majority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 4106
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable Themis Klarides
House Minority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 4200
Hartford, CT 06106

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 Tavern (Plainville)

Tyler Anderson & AJ 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

Brazi'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 Kreymborg

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)