

March 21, 2020

The Honorable Charles Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Schumer:

I am writing to ask you to help minimize the unprecedented impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on Long Island's economy, specifically the hospitality industry. Here on Long Island, not only is our once-thriving restaurant industry a source of thousands of jobs for chefs, servers, bartenders and musicians, but independent neighborhood restaurants form a cornerstone of our community. Not only do restaurants nourish communities with food, they nourish our spirits by providing a place to come together, make new friends, relax after work, meet for a book club, bridal shower, or bachelor party, and listen to live music by local musicians.

The second largest private sector employer in the United States, the restaurant industry employs more than 15 million people directly, and millions more in indirect employment in other sectors. The devastating effect COVID-19 is already having on this industry is significant not just because so many people who rely on it for their livelihoods will lose their incomes, but because people will lose the many places where they have always come together to experience a sense of community **just when we need those places the most**. Saving the restaurant sector is critical to our country's economic vitality and well-being.

I understand that the emergency mandates that have required the industry to serve fewer customers were necessary to help safeguard our citizens as we seek to slow the advance of COVID-19. But, as I am sure you know, long before COVID-19 is defeated, as much as 75% of restaurants will be forced to close their doors forever. Therefore, our small business owners and their employees in this sector need your help NOW!

Here on Long Island, a \$6 billion tourism economy will be ravaged if our restaurants are shuttered. Restaurant owners are struggling to make payroll and even a good night of take-out orders will not fill the gap left by eat-in diners they are no longer permitted to serve. Many of the restaurants that are forced to close, will never open their doors again, which means not only will it take years to get back those jobs and the lost tourism revenue, but the fabric of our communities will be torn apart for a long time to come. Without aggressive action from the federal government, the future of the tourism and hospitality industry that Long Island's economy depends on looks grim.

So, we urge you to take critical steps to support this crucial industry. Specifically:

- Create a substantial ***Restaurant & Food Industry Recovery Fund*** to provide immediate liquidity to compensate for reduced revenues due to COVID-19;
- Provide assistance to allow businesses to defer mortgage, lease and loan obligations. Because small businesses do not have long-term cash reserves, this relief is needed immediately;
- Provide additional funds for Federally-Backed Business Interruption Insurance. Most current policies are likely to deny claims for business interruption due to a “virus.” Expediting this provision is critical.
- Create a federal loan program for business owners to obtain loans equal to lost revenue during an extended emergency period – at least three months;
- Authorize additional funds for Disaster Unemployment Assistance;
- Authorize permission for businesses to delay, defer or forgo tax obligations to states and banking institutions that impact their cash flow.
- Provide tax credits for businesses that retain employees.
- Reduced credit card interchange fees and employee payroll taxes.

Taken together, these proposals will help ensure that our local restaurants have the tools they need to survive the dramatic loss in revenue caused by the Coronavirus.

You have always been a leader who fights for Long Islanders. Now more than ever, I am counting on you to fight for our local small business owners, the workers who depend on this industry for their livelihoods, our Long Island community and the nation.

Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

[Add Signature & Printed Name]

[Add email and/or phone number for contact purposes]