



July 27, 2020

The Honorable Larry Hogan  
Chair  
National Governors Association  
444 N. Capitol Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Governor Hogan:

The U.S. restaurant industry has lost more jobs and more revenue than any other sector of the economy because of COVID-19 shutdowns and related economic fallout—and our industry will be among the slowest to recover. During the height of the shutdowns, the industry shed two-thirds of all jobs and March-June, it lost more than \$145 billion in revenue. Just as we were starting to reopen our doors, nearly 100,000 locations have been shuttered again, by state or local mandate putting people out of work and costing owners thousands in lost reopening investments. Throughout this public health crisis, our industry has maintained an unwavering commitment to customer and employee safety. Closing the dining rooms of restaurants that are operating within the prescribed guidelines harms our communities and hinders our recovery.

The U.S. restaurant industry is historically highly regulated, which enables restaurants to work quickly and constructively with local and state regulators to enact new customer and employee safety protocols and to work with federal officials to adopt best practices like the new Centers for Disease Control (CDC) restaurant considerations. When states were beginning to think about reopening their economies this spring, the National Restaurant Association worked with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), academia, the Conference for Food Protection, public health officials and industry representatives, to produce [detailed guidance for operators](#) on how to reopen in a safe way for employees, customers, and their communities. Our industry truly believes that we are all in this together and that any bad actors are not representative of our industry.

Despite this unparalleled commitment to customer and employee safety, inaccurate information about the industry continues to dot media coverage, social media conversations, and statements from some public officials. These statements have even included references to a non-peer reviewed paper asserting COVID-19 could have spread in a crowded restaurant in China. This incident happened early in the spread of the novel coronavirus and before U.S. restaurants began following current safety protocols and distancing requirements. The paper cannot and should not be used as a reliable scientific model. In fact, the model was never reproduced and relies on customer density and seating patterns not currently allowable in any U.S. restaurant. The ongoing comparisons between a single restaurant in China to America's restaurant industry, steeped in a legacy of food handling safety, has had a negative impact on U.S. restaurants, our employees, and has hindered our path toward recovery.<sup>1</sup>

Surviving this public health crisis is a responsibility our industry and every owner and employee, takes seriously. The National Restaurant Association, our state restaurant association partners and industry

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<sup>1</sup> *The Washington Post* noted (May 28) that U.S. restaurants are in fact made safer because of the expensive high-capacity air conditioning systems widely used in domestic commercial and public buildings, in contrast to the small, inexpensive systems common in China.



leaders have made clear that government COVID-19 protocols such as public mask requirements are effective and must be followed, and that restaurants that violate safety and health laws should not remain open.

The safety of our customers and employees has always been—and always will be—the top priority of our industry. With this letter I am including a copy of the National Restaurant Association Reopening Guidance. This document is designed to be used in conjunction with the FDA Food Code requirements, and all guidance the CDC, FDA, and state and local health officials are requiring as the states move through the phased reopening of their economies. The National Restaurant Association remains in close and regular contact with key agencies and as these federal agencies update their science-based guidance, the Association is committed to updating this document.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if I can provide further information regarding our safety record and recommendations and the science that informs these policies.

Thank you for your consideration and support of our industry.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L. Lynch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Lawrence J. Lynch, CAE  
Senior Vice President, Science and Industry  
National Restaurant Association