

BRIAN HIGGINS
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TASK FORCE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3226

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Hon. Maxine Waters
Chair
House Committee on Financial Services
2129 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Nydia M. Velázquez
Chair
House Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. John Yarmuth
Chair
House Committee on the Budget
204-E Cannon HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs Waters, Velázquez, and Yarmuth:

Thank you for your tireless efforts to support our nation's small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. While much has been done to ensure these community cornerstones survive unprecedented public health measures and economic challenges, a long road to full recovery lies ahead. As we continue to craft the next stage of COVID-19 relief, I write to call special attention to the plight of America's independent restaurants, and encourage any targeted restaurant relief fund prioritize delivering assistance to small, independent establishments.

Independent restaurants have suffered disproportionately throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The experience of dining out is incompatible with necessary public health restrictions such as stay-at-home orders, mask-wearing, social distancing, and capacity limits. Restaurants have shown impressive ingenuity by creating outdoor dining spaces and encouraging take-out and delivery, but these adaptations cannot fully compensate for business lost. Without additional action, the New York Restaurant Association estimates 54% of restaurants in New York alone could close, and the 15 million jobs nationwide supported by the restaurant industry hang in jeopardy.

While efforts like the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) have provided much-needed relief to small businesses, restaurants require a separate assistance fund due to their unique structure, such as the fund proposed by Rep. Blumenauer's legislation, the RESTAURANTS Act. A restaurant relief fund must consider lessons learned from previous small business relief programs by prioritizing small, independent establishments' ability to access relief funds. The RESTAURANTS Act does this by targeting relief to restaurants with 20 locations or fewer under common ownership, and those involved with designing and implementing this program should follow this mandate. This program must be designed, from drafting regulations to execution on the ground, with our neighborhood restaurants in mind, or we risk losing them entirely. Options such as staggered opening of application periods, expedited application processes, targeted outreach, and more will ensure the relief

fund is accessible to restaurants in need.

Thank you for your kind consideration and attention to this most important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress