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January 15, 2021

President-Elect Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
Biden-Harris Transition  
1401 Constitution Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear President-Elect Biden:

Your plan to rescue America is the bold and urgent path forward needed to guide our country out of the COVID-19 pandemic and into public health and economic recovery. I applaud this vision and look forward to working together on its implementation. As we consider how to move forward, I respectfully request that you give significant consideration to restaurants, which are central components of our communities and cultures, and are at risk of wholesale closure due to the risks created by the pandemic.

Restaurants are a critical piece of our culture because of how they bring people together and anchor communities. They are important small businesses to cities and towns of all sizes, creative outlets for culinary artists, and help us meet our most basic needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how fragile this industry is to disruption by public health emergencies. Restaurants have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The December 2020 jobs report alone lists a loss of 372,000 restaurant jobs. Restaurant revenues have decreased by 40%, but expenses remain level, and in some cases have increased. Each day, there is more news of establishments closing or speculative lists of which beloved community institutions may not be able to survive the pandemic. Continued COVID-19 community spread and ever-changing local and state regulations make the already challenging business of restaurant proprietorship even more difficult. While restaurants have shown impressive ingenuity in adapting operations to maintain safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, it cannot fully compensate for once-full dining rooms. It is imperative that we act to save these neighborhood fixtures.

While programs like the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) have kept America's small businesses alive, restaurants have a unique structure and require a fund of their own. In order to ensure restaurants are able to stay afloat, we must expeditiously pass the RESTAURANTS Act, either included in future COVID-19 relief legislation or as a stand-alone bill. This effort, led by Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), would establish a \$120 billion grant program as a lifeline to restaurants. A 2020 study estimates the legislation would generate at least \$183 billion in primary benefits and \$65 billion in secondary benefits.

Restaurants are more than places to order a meal, they are centers of community, fixtures around which our relationships, routines, and traditions revolve. The COVID-19 pandemic has already cost our country so much. We must do everything we can to ensure restaurants are still standing on the other side. Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,



BRIAN HIGGINS  
Member of Congress