December 4, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

America faces its most difficult phase in the fight against the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). COVID-19 case numbers are spiking across the nation, with more than one in 400 Americans testing positive in the last week alone. This unprecedented increase has prompted a wave of new restrictions ranging from nighttime closures and restrictions on indoor dining in New York, North Dakota, and Maryland to takeout-only in Oregon and stay-at-home orders in New Mexico. For the second time this year, restaurants and bars are having to limit operations or close their doors completely, raising concerns about their ability to survive the long winter ahead. They need quick relief to keep their workers employed and hold onto their businesses. Congress needs to act speedily and pass the RESTAURANTS Act to help save local restaurants across the country and the millions of workers they employ.

The restaurant industry has been uniquely devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly one in four jobs lost from the pandemic were those of restaurant and bar workers. The food and beverage industry is still down 2.3 million jobs since the pandemic began, a number that is sure to rise with increasing infection rates and new restrictions. Despite bearing the brunt of this economic crisis, independent restaurants have received no directly tailored federal aid. Many independent restaurant owners did not benefit from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) because the program did not match their business model or needs.

The restaurant sector is the second-largest private employer after health care, and for countless Americans they provide the first opportunity for a job. These businesses are the beating heart of communities across America, but the pandemic puts their survival in jeopardy. This threat affects restaurants and their employees and every other link in the $1 trillion restaurant supply chain. The food supply chain touches every corner of the country and supports tens of millions
of livelihoods, including farm workers, fishermen, and truck drivers. A new round of restaurant closures is likely to have dire effects on the entire food supply chain.

The RESTAURANTS Act would create a restaurant revitalization fund that can be used for a wide range of expenses, including payroll and benefits, food, utilities, rent, maintenance, and supplies. This legislation has gained bipartisan support in Congress, as well as backing from restauranteurs and a large coalition of industries that rely on restaurants. It passed the House of Representatives on October 1, 2020, in H.R. 925 (Section 607, Division O). A June 2020 study on the legislation found it would generate at least $183 billion in primary benefits and $65 billion in secondary benefits – more than double the amount of the fund itself. This type of economic multiplier is needed now more than ever.

We urge you to pass the RESTAURANTS Act quickly as part of a COVID-19 relief bill or a year-end spending bill. We look forward to partnering with you to save local restaurants across America.

Sincerely,

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Roger F. Wicker                      Earl Blumenauer
United States Senator               Member of Congress

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Kyrsten Sinema                      Brian Fitzpatrick
United States Senator               Member of Congress

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/l/s/ Lindsey O. Graham           /l/s/ Dick Durbin
United States Senator               United States Senator

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/s/ John Cornyn
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/ Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

/s/ Thom Tillis
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/ Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

/s/ Mazie Hirono
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator
/s/  
Ed Markey  
United States Senator

/s/  
Bob Menendez  
United States Senator

/s/  
Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator

/s/  
Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator

/s/  
Jackie Rosen  
United States Senator

/s/  
Tina Smith  
United States Senator

/s/  
Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

/s/  
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

/s/  
Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

/s/  
Cindy Axne  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ami Bera, M.D.  
Member of Congress
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David N. Cicilline  
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Yvette Clarke  
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Steve Cohen  
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Jim Cooper  
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J. Luis Correa  
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Jim Costa  
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TJ Cox  
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Angie Craig  
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Charlie Crist  
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Jason Crow  
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Henry Cuellar  
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Danny K. Davis  
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Peter A. DeFazio
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Rosa DeLauro
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Suzan K. DelBene
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Ted Deutch
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Debbie Dingell
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Karen Bass
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