March 18, 2020

Dear Local Elected Officials:

The Colorado Restaurant Association (CRA) is writing with concern on the recently confirmed COVID-19 cases in Colorado. As one of the largest employers in the state, the Colorado restaurant industry employs 294,000 people making up 10% of Colorado’s workforce. There are more than 12,500 food service locations in Colorado, and the majority of those are locally owned small businesses.

Restaurants are experiencing significant hardships over the reduction in revenue because people are not going out to eat. In the last week, we have received hundreds of phone calls from restaurant operators who are frightened and don’t know if they are going to be able to re-open their businesses when this crisis is over. With the announcement of the entire state banning dine-in service, even more restaurants are concerned that they will not be able to keep their doors open.

I am writing to ask you to work with us and help identify some temporary changes that can be made to alleviate some of the hardships restaurants are experiencing. We know that economic relief for affected businesses is being considered at all levels of government, and we have identified a few things that we believe you may be able to consider:

- Don’t charge for parking meters so that people can more easily pick up food
- Call for rent and loan abatement for workers and restaurants/bars
- Consider loan programs for businesses to get through the state of emergency
- Waive penalties for late fillings of any kind from businesses
- Provide relief for renewal costs of any licensure during the state of emergency
- Ensure that staffing level are maintained for ALL departments interacting with businesses or their employees
- Consider delayed payment of fines for restaurant health code violations
- Quick refunds for overpayment of taxes
- Delay remittance of sales tax for restaurants during the state of emergency
- Suspend sales tax on “non-essential” paper goods sold to a restaurant (togo containers)

Thank you for your continued support for our industry. We welcome dialogue and are happy to be a resource for your office.

Sincerely,

Sonia Riggs, President & CEO