

December 10, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy, and Schumer:

Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, local communities have gathered together to support one another as we collectively navigate this unprecedented and tumultuous time. Stories of small businesses who have stepped up to the occasion to provide for their communities tell the tale of the true American spirit.

However, now the same restaurants, which serve as the backbone of our local economies, and are the second-largest private employer, need immediate Congressional action and support to help them survive. Restaurants are being hit particularly hard by closures due to rising COVID cases, and federal relief will help them keep their doors open.

As Congress considers the next round of coronavirus pandemic relief, it is essential that any federal relief include a second draw from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), with modifications to ensure that the PPP program works for restaurants. These loans are essential for restaurants to cover payroll expenses and other costs associated with maintaining their businesses during these difficult times.

The National Restaurant Association estimates that 87% of full service restaurants (independent, chain, and franchise) have lost a third of their revenue, while 58% expect to continue furloughs and layoffs for the next three months if action is not taken immediately. Furthering the concerns, of the 500,000 restaurants in the country, nearly 17% - more than 110,000 - are completely closed and that number continues to grow every single day.

Congress cannot allow this economic decline to continue. The impact on minority-owned businesses is even more telling. In at least 90% of all majority-Black and majority-Latino or Hispanic neighborhoods, a majority of small businesses have cash buffers of less than three weeks, compared to only 35% of majority-white neighborhoods. This year, 41% of Black-owned business owners have had to permanently close their doors. Additionally, as more than half the States do *not* have protections ensuring equal access to economic and social support for LGBTQ Americans, this further underscores the inequities faced by those already hit hard by the virus and its economic fallout.

Restaurants have done all they can to shift their business models to allow for safe dining, taking precautions to protect employees and patrons, and allow for more delivery and pick up options. A study by DoorDash found that 57% of restaurant owners say their business would have closed during the current crisis without the support of third-party delivery platforms, yet all their efforts are simply not enough to stem the tide of economic devastation without Congressional support and assistance.

We urge you to act quickly and swiftly to help save restaurants and ensure immediate access to a second draw from the Paycheck Protection Program. While there is no perfect solution, for each moment we wait, we see thousands of restaurants, small business owners, and service industry professionals pay a heavy economic toll that will take decades to recover.

We thank you for your consideration and ask you for immediate action to save local businesses, restaurants, and the livelihoods of so many Americans across the country.

Sincerely,