

MONTEREY COUNTY



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September 24, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: COVID-19 Restaurant Reopening Plan

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the County of Monterey, we write you regarding the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis that continues to devastate the local restaurant community in our region. We urge you to allow counties to implement safe restaurant policies in accordance with established state and county safety protocols, thus enabling restaurants in the purple tier to open immediately for indoor dining at 25% of pre-COVID-19 capacity – moving to 50% once counties achieve the red tier.

While we deeply appreciate the complexity of the ongoing crisis and the bold actions you have been forced to take, we are also seeing firsthand the continued economic and employment fallout affecting our residents. Many restaurants have already closed, putting thousands of people out of work. This has been particularly impactful on our Latinx population that makes up more than 60% of restaurant workers in our region. Many more restaurants are on the edge of bankruptcy and will close permanently if we are not allowed to pursue a workable safe pathway to indoor dining in the near future.

Outdoor dining has not been the savior some expected. Space limitations, especially in our small urban settings, as well as environmental factors such as the heat and toxic smoke caused by the River fire, Carmel fire and most recently the 128,000-acre Dolan fire have significantly limited the number of customers visiting our restaurants for outdoor dining. Soon, seasonal temperature changes and precipitation will also render patio dining much less practical.

Limiting restaurant operations to take-out, delivery and patio dining results in far fewer employees on payrolls, fewer customers and is unsustainable as a business model for our restaurants. Restaurants have been very productive partners with counties and the State, are among the largest sources of state and local sales tax revenue and employ massive numbers of California residents.

The County of Monterey has consistently enforced all state and local COVID-19 regulations and remains committed to protecting public health, while helping restaurants operate in a safe manner and at sustainable capacity levels. Restaurants already have some of the most stringent industry protocols and guidance issued by the state that are further enhanced by local health orders and inspectors. In addition, most restaurants have

already invested great sums remodeling their facilities to comply with enhanced safety protocols such as plexiglass barriers, socially distant table alignments, PPE and employee protection protocols. They are invested in maintaining a safe business environment. As you know, most other states already allow statewide, indoor dining with manageable social distancing guidelines and reduced, but sustainable capacities. The County is willing to support the imposition of additional safety protocols if they will lead to reopening.

Restaurants need to be able to move back inside in a safe and timely manner. Please help us protect our community, jobs, economy and families while still maintaining public health.

A recent survey of California restaurants found that the prognosis for economic survival is grim, with 54% of respondents indicating their Paycheck Protection Program funds dried up at the end of August, 17.7% will dry up by the end of September, and another 14.5% indicated their relief funds will be gone by the end of October. These funds were the lifeline that allowed many restaurants to remain open.

On behalf of the County of Monterey Board of Supervisors, we are respectfully asking that you continue to improve upon the state tiered program by immediately allowing restaurants in the purple tier to open for indoor dining at 25% capacity, moving to 50% once the red tier has been achieved, all while following the social distancing standards and protocols previously adopted by the state and county.

Sincerely,



Chris M. Lopez
Chair, Board of Supervisors

CC: Hon. Bill Monning, 17th Senate District
Hon. Anna Caballero, 12th Senate District
Hon. Robert Rivas, 30th Assembly District
Hon. Mark Stone, 29th Assembly District
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Rural Counties Representative of California (RCRC)
California Restaurant Association
Monterey County Mayors Association
Monterey County Hospitality Association
Bill Perocchi, CEO, Pebble Beach Company
Ted Balestreri, Chairman & CEO, Cannery Row Company
Teddy Balestreri, II, Past Chairman of the Board, California Restaurant Association
Vice President of Hospitality Operations and Community Relations, Cannery Row Company
Governor's Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery