



Local Restaurateurs, Hospitality Industry Urge State Legislature to Make Alcohol-To-Go Permanent Amid Budget Hearings

Restaurants across New York State want Legislature to embrace Governor Hochul's proposal and make to-go wine and cocktails permanent

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NEW YORK STATE – Today, the New York State Restaurant Association, alongside restaurant owners in Albany, Buffalo, Long Island, New York City and Westchester County held press conferences to urge the New York State Legislature to support Governor Hochul's proposal to make to-go alcoholic beverages from bars and restaurants permanent. The calls come amid today's budget subcommittee hearing on Economic Development. The unified show of support throughout the state demonstrates the widespread need for this legislation to stimulate economic recovery. Alcohol-to-go provided an additional revenue stream throughout the pandemic for restaurants and now the industry is urging the legislature to adopt the executive proposal and make to-go wine and cocktails permanent. On top of that, the measure is wildly popular across the state.

"The time to act is now and the state Legislature must get on board. Governor Hochul's proposal makes clear the Executive Chamber's commitment to supporting the economic recovery of the restaurant industry. New Yorkers overwhelmingly support this policy and it falls to the legislature to stand with restaurants who have faced unprecedented economic hardships since the beginning of the pandemic," **said Melissa Fleischut, President and CEO of the New York State Restaurant Association.**

Under New York's state of emergency during the COVID-19 pandemic, restaurants and bars were allowed to sell alcoholic beverages to-go. However, once the emergency order ended, so did the policy allowing restaurants and bars to continue this needed and reliable revenue stream.

"Small businesses, particularly restaurants, were directly negatively affected by the COVID pandemic. Allowing alcohol-to-go helped them weather the storm. It is critical that we continue to support these small businesses now by making it permanent. I am happy to be a co-sponsor of this legislation," **said Senator Neil Breslin.**

"To-go drinks have been a much-needed lifeline for the restaurant industry. These small businesses employ hundreds of thousands, and they serve as a pillar of a broader hospitality and tourism industry that employs hundreds of thousands more. Our world class restaurant industry contributes to making New York a global destination. That's why their success remains such a critical part of building a sound recovery from the pandemic. The thoughtful implementation of to-go drinks, reflected in my legislation (S8184/A7732) and in Governor Hochul's budget proposal, would mean a more secure future for these small businesses and their employees," **said Senator Leroy Comrie.**



"New York continues to identify ways to help small businesses Build Back Better post-pandemic, and Governor Hochul's proposal to make to-go alcohol a permanent option is one of many tangible ways we can provide support to restaurants and craft producers statewide," **said Senator Tim Kennedy.**

"The coronavirus has taken an immense toll on the restaurant and hospitality industry in New York State. While the Omicron variant is on the decline, we don't know what the future holds and we need to do what we can to stimulate economic recovery long term. It makes sense to enact legislation that will let the hospitality industry benefit permanently from a revenue stream that could make the difference between staying open and losing their livelihood forever," **said Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz (D-Brooklyn), who introduced alcohol-to-go legislation.**

"The lingering effects of COVID-19 have been consistent, but so has the determination of many in the restaurant industry to persevere and hope for better days. The Governor's virtual toast for the return of alcohol-to-go was encouraging, but was only the first step in this process. Drinks-to-go helped many in the industry stay open, keeping those in our communities employed. We must now do our part in the state Legislature to help these small businesses that are crucial pillars of our Main Streets and Downtown areas. Alcohol-to-go by itself is not the answer, but this program can certainly be an integral part of solidifying the shaky economic ground many local eateries still find themselves on," **said Assemblymember John McDonald.**

"During the pandemic, customers ordering takeout food were permitted to add deliciously crafted cocktails or a bottle of wine selected to enhance their meal. This innovation, intended to bolster one of the businesses suffering the most during the pandemic, was a welcome option. New Yorkers enthusiastically supported the opportunity to take home a margarita with their Mexican take out meal, at the same time they continue to patronize retail liquor stores. I join those who appreciate this service and the support it provides to an industry that has endured tremendous hardships over the past two years," **said Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner.**

"Restaurants are still learning how to survive in the midst of a pandemic. Lasting economic impacts are being felt from changes in customer behavior, a shrinking work force and rising prices. However, a positive lesson from the pandemic was the success of alcohol-to-go. New York State adopted this practice to support restaurants who were able to pivot their businesses and create a new revenue stream. As lawmakers look to the future, our new normal should learn from the lessons of the pandemic and bring back alcohol-to-go permanently," **said Dominick Purnomo, Wine Director & co-owner of Yono's & dp, An American Brasserie.**

"Of all the challenges we are currently facing and had to confront during the pandemic, there were some silver linings. Alcohol-to-go was one. But restaurants invested to make this work, and it was gone overnight, despite pleas from the industry and consumers. Lawmakers have the power to make this permanent and allow our alcohol-to-go programs to once again flourish. I urge the legislature to listen to New Yorkers, restaurant owners and our own Governor Hochul and bring back alcohol-to-go permanently," **said Nick Pitillo, owner of Osteria 166 in Buffalo.**



"The lingering effects of COVID-19 have been consistent, but so has the determination for many in the restaurant industry to persevere and hope for better days. The Governor's virtual toast for the return of alcohol-to-go was encouraging, but we need the Legislature to step up. Cocktails-to-go weren't just a mere trend or fad that would cushion the consistent blows our industry faced. It helps us stay open and keep our beloved employees working. For many, we're still in danger, but alcohol-to-go can give us all a better chance of surviving," **said Harry Poole, chef and owner of Jackson's in Commack.**

"The pandemic amplified the need for temporary fixes that would serve a short-term purpose. What many forget is that the effects of this pandemic are now long term, and the once temporary fixes have become new constants. In many ways, we will never go back to the way things were in early 2020. Drinks-to-go has been embraced by all. It was wildly successful and works for both restaurants and consumers. The time is now to make this temporary fix and long-term solution. This is our last shot," **said Loycent Gordon, owner and CEO Neir's Tavern in Woodhaven.**

"Our ask today is simple—make alcohol-to-go permanent. From Buffalo to Long Island, my fellow restaurant operators are urging the state Legislature to take action. Listen to what the public wants and follow Governor Hochul's lead. The restaurant industry is far from out of the woods and facing new challenges brought on by the pandemic. This policy works for both the industry and New Yorkers and it is time for the Legislature to act," **said Sergio Brasesco, owner of Emilio Ristorante in Harrison.**

A [survey](#) conducted by the New York State Restaurant Association in 2021 found that 78% of New Yorkers support changing the state law to permanently allow to-go alcoholic beverages. The restaurants are urging the public to call on their elected officials to make Governor Hochul's proposal permanent.