



March 18, 2020

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

To the Honorable Governor Andrew Cuomo,

On behalf of our industry, we wholeheartedly applaud your leadership in this very difficult time. It will come as no surprise to you that brick-and-mortar independent restaurants across the state are suffering this week — many have already shut their doors, never to reopen, and forced to lay off their employees. With this crisis developing so rapidly, there was no time to prepare, and now with the shutdown in place, the pain is already setting in. This industry that makes our state so special is feeling immense pressure and we need help. That is why I am writing to you, asking for some immediate, short-term relief by having the state delay the sales tax payment that is due Friday, March 20, 2020.

While the payment of sales tax usually doesn't provide much of an economic burden for our businesses, every dollar has taken on additional meaning and importance since this crisis began and the shutdown ordered. The need for social distancing is clear and understood, but has forced restaurants to take immediate, desperate measures to pay bills with little or no revenue. Dining in restaurants has been banned for the time being, eliminating the service experience many restaurants' business model is built upon. While we thank and applaud your decision to maintain and promote takeout and delivery services, most restaurants are trying to take what may previously have been 5-10% of their revenue and make it pay all the bills that haven't gone away. In this first week, restaurants are trying desperately to adapt and save as many of their employees as possible while maintaining wages during these dark days, but many simply cannot. Every dollar we can defer during this period allows restaurant owners to pay employees and make it another day.

Delaying the payment of sales tax allows immediate breathing room to an industry in desperate need of it. Allowing time to develop a delivery and take out customer base will be critical as this crisis stretches on, not only as a job provider but also to relieve the growing pressure grocery stores are facing. People need options for food. We simply cannot keep taking food options off the table.

You have championed the hospitality industry for years now — an industry that hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers rely on. When we finally make it through this dark time, we'll need this industry more than ever to help our downtowns return to life and to help people remember what it is like to be a part of a community. This small gesture on your part now in delaying this sales tax payment will help to ensure that at least some of these restaurants will be there to help us rebuild together.