



State Elected Officials, Restaurant Association Mark Two Years of Pandemic Hardship, Amplify Calls for Alcohol-To-Go

Event marks two-year anniversary of restaurants' forced closure and urges inclusion of alcohol-to-go in final 2022-2023FY budget

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QUEENS, NY — Today, State Senator Ramos, Assemblymembers Cruz and González-Rojas and the New York State Restaurant Association (NYSRA) joined local restaurant owners in Queens to urge New York State to include alcohol-to-go in the final adopted budget. The unified calls demonstrate broad support for making alcohol-to-go permanent and fall on the two-year anniversary of New York State on PAUSE, the emergency orders that shuttered all restaurants at the beginning of the pandemic.

Those in attendance stand behind Governor Hochul's efforts to make it permanent and call for this wildly popular lifeline for restaurants to be included in the final budget, which must be approved by March 31, 2022.

"Just like temporary liquor licenses, bringing back to-go cocktails is about parity for small businesses in the restaurant industry. During the height of the pandemic, the hospitality industry used the expanse of its creativity to stay afloat while keeping our communities safe. The to-go drink revenue stream allowed them to hire more people and reinvigorate our commercial corridors when it was desperately needed. Now, they need this lifeline to recovery, and we can deliver," **said State Senator Jessica Ramos (D-Queens), prime co-sponsor of S8184.**

"As we rebuild from the pandemic, New York needs to help revitalize industries hit the hardest. A lifeline to many restaurants and small businesses during their darkest times, the consensus is clear: reinstating the alcohol to go program is the right thing to do for our state," **said Assemblymember Nily Rozic (D,WF-Flushing).**

"The restaurant industry, especially in New York City where local restaurants help shape the bedrock of many communities, were ravaged during the pandemic. Drinks to-go is just one way the legislature can help local business owners and stimulate their economic recovery. They simply want to offer the same menu items to take-out customers that dine-in customers enjoy. I call on my colleagues to support making this revenue generator permanent," **said Assemblymember Catalina Cruz (D-Queens).**



"New York prides itself on having some of the greatest restaurants and bars in the world. These last two years have made it nearly impossible for many restaurants to stay afloat, and many small business owners had to close their doors. Despite these challenges, restaurants not only kept our communities fed but often went above and beyond what they could do. In my district, many struggling restaurants showed up for our communities by donating food to hospital workers on the frontlines. We owe these pillars of our communities a lifeline, and alcohol-to-go proved to be just that. I urge my colleagues and the Governor to make the successful program a permanent feature of New York life by including it in the enacted state budget," **said Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas (D-Queens).**

"A healthy restaurant industry serves as a linchpin for a broader hospitality economy. Both employ hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers and contribute to our status as a preeminent global destination. Returning to a sensible to-go drinks policy would support ongoing efforts to rebuild and recover Queens' and New York State's economy from the worst days of the pandemic – remembering those worst days hit the restaurant industry and workers particularly hard. We must pursue a to-go drinks policy that means these small businesses have an opportunity to thrive," **said State Senator Leroy Comrie (D-Queens), Sponsor of To-Go Drinks Legislation in the State Senate.**

"During the height of the pandemic, alcohol-to-go was a lifeline for our restaurants and bars when they needed us most. Drinks to go made our city and state more vibrant and kept beloved businesses alive. I urge my colleagues to consider the overwhelming majority of New Yorkers who, in poll after poll, say they want us to again permit alcohol sales to go. Cheers!" **said State Senator Zellnor Myrie (D-Brooklyn).**

"The COVID pandemic hurt a wide range of businesses across New York State, and many of our local restaurants and bars who couldn't serve patrons because of the restrictions on indoor dining felt that pain. As a way to alleviate some of that hardship, during New York's state of emergency we allowed bars and restaurants to serve to-go alcoholic beverages. This initiative helped these establishments stay in business and keep their workers employed. Now that the city and state COVID numbers are trending down and the emergency order has been lifted, that policy has been taken away. With seeing how well the initiative worked, I believe that issues and differences can be addressed in order to have the alcohol to-go policy in place to assist our local bars and restaurants financially recuperate even further," **said State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. (D-Queens, Brooklyn).**

"The restaurant and hospitality industry in New York State was devastated by the pandemic and is still struggling to recover. 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 Assemblymember Steven Cymbrowitz (D-Brooklyn), who introduced alcohol-to-go legislation.**

“To-go drinks are a crucial part of the revitalization process of our restaurant industry. The restaurant industry was hit particularly hard during the pandemic, but the temporary sale of to-go drinks was as a lifeline. The wildly popular program can continue to serve as a revenue stream that can help bring the industry back,” **said Assemblymember Karines Reyes (D-Bronx).**

“The restaurants in Southeast Queens are a major factor in making our community thrive. We have witnessed the devastating effects of the pandemic on businesses across New York City. The food service industry has been one of the most affected, causing some to close their doors forever. Drinks-to-go is just the first step in the right direction towards economic revitalization for our restaurant and food service industry,” **said Assemblymember Alicia Hyndman (D-Queens).**

“Cheers!” **said Assemblymember Stacey Pheffer Amato (D-Queens).**

“Two years ago, no one could have anticipated the plight that laid ahead for our industry. Restaurants quickly pivoted to robust take-out programs to keep from drowning. For 15 months, alcohol-to-go allowed restaurants to survive by offering customers their full menu offerings as we were hampered by various restrictions and the rise of variants. Alcohol-to-go is critical to the recovery of our \$50-billion industry and has the support of 78% of New Yorkers. We know there is support in both houses and we urge the state to include alcohol-to-go in the final enacted budget,” **said Melissa Fleischut, President and CEO of New York State Restaurant Association.**

The economic hardships of the pandemic caused many restaurants to permanently shut their doors or cut service hours, costing the state valuable sales tax revenue. Alcohol-to-go is a critical lifeline for restaurants to recoup sales to pre-pandemic levels that provided \$4 billion in sales tax to the state’s coffers, highlighting its direct impact on state revenue.

A [survey](#) conducted by the state association in May 2021 found more than 78% of New Yorkers support alcohol-to-go becoming permanent. The permanent inclusion of alcoholic beverages with takeout and delivery would allow for more restaurants to develop alcohol-to-go programs and encourage new restaurants to participate. According to a survey completed by the New York State Restaurant Association, 98% of restaurant operators that previously offered off-premises alcoholic beverages say they would resume offering this option if New York State made alcohol-to-go permanent.



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

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