



# Washington State Legislature

November 16, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504

Re: New COVID Restrictions for Restaurants

The Honorable Governor Jay Inslee:

We were surprised to hear that the new restrictions that were announced Sunday, Nov. 15, will include fully closing indoor dining in restaurants for four weeks. While we understand that the current trajectory of COVID cases is unsustainable and that a pullback is necessary and appropriate to save lives, the impacts of this specific measure will leave lasting holes in the economic and cultural fabric of every community across the state.

The CDC data cited by you as proof of the science behind closing indoor dining also suggests that small private gathers of less than 10 people are not linked to increased spread, which we know to be refuted by other scientific data. When data is used to justify public policy, it should be done with the knowledge that studies, especially about such a novel virus, are only a small and incomplete view of a larger picture.

Shutting down indoor dining for restaurants, who have been active and willing partners in the fight against COVID, is not the right first step in this latest pullback. Reducing indoor dining capacity by another 25%, instead of completely closing it down, seems like a logical first step that could be a lifeline to these community institutions while also heightening safety. In addition, it is possible that people will be *more* likely to meet in private homes where no distancing and masking is enforced if they cannot meet in public in a safer restaurant setting.

The impact of this decision is concerning, and we urge you to reconsider this decision for the following reasons:

- Food service and accommodation represent the industry most significantly impacted, with 93,000 workers unemployed – exponentially larger than any other industry
- We can expect 100,000 more food service and accommodation workers will lose their jobs, ***right before the holidays***. This time with no federal benefit.
- Data collected by contact tracing professionals indicate less than 1% of our state's COVID-19 community spread is epidemiologically linked to restaurants
- Data suggests that restaurants are not the problem, yet the decision to close indoor dining will further their economic harm.
- These businesses represent the dream and pathway for thousands of families. Closure of indoor dining for an additional month makes survival impossible for these small, local businesses and will slow our recovery once COVID-19 has been defeated.

We urge you to reconsider this restriction, or identify alternative methods to control the spread of the virus, including:



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- Allowing indoor dining but at 25% reduced capacity
- Re-instating the same household requirement
- Re-instating the 10pm alcohol service cut off
- Re-instating table limits
- Containing restaurant restrictions to counties or neighborhoods that have the highest infection rates

Thank you for your consideration,

Senator Mark Mullet  
5<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

Senator Christine Rolfes  
23<sup>rd</sup> Legislative District

Senator Rebecca Saldaña  
37<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

Senator Joe Nguyen  
34<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

Senator Steve Hobbs  
44<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

Senator Dean Takko  
19<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

Senator Karen Keiser  
33<sup>rd</sup> Legislative District

Representative Bill Ramos  
5<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

Representative Lisa Callan  
5<sup>th</sup> Legislative District