



RESTAURANTS ADVANCING INDUSTRY STANDARDS in EMPLOYMENT

March 20, 2020

To: Governor M. Cuomo
New York State Executive Chamber
VIA EMAIL

"Many bars and restaurants with daunting rents exist on a margin as thin as a paring knife and may never return from March 16, 2020."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/16/nyregion/nyc-closing-bars-restaurants-coronavirus.html>

Dear Governor Cuomo,

First, our sincerest thank you for your incredible leadership in this deeply challenging moment.

We are the New York leadership of RAISE, an association of over 800 restaurant owners who are committed to sustainable wages and working conditions for our employees. **We write to you today requesting a meeting to discuss a proposal, which would allow you to both raise workers' wages and meet the needs of responsible employers.**

As you know, restaurants are struggling mightily, or have closed completely, as a result of the pandemic. This has been devastating for tipped servers, who worked for weeks with dramatically depressed tips, and who are now completely jobless. A full wage - what we call One Fair Wage - would have helped them and their families in concrete ways. Furthermore, the health crisis was exacerbated when employees worked while sick because they couldn't afford to miss a payday. Paid time off would have allowed them to avoid possibly infecting co-workers and customers.

This unprecedented crisis has made many restaurateurs reconsider their resistance to the concepts of One Fair Wage and paid sick time, as well as paid time off and expanded access to healthcare. They have been reaching out to us and asking how they can get involved with our cause. Some of them, in fact, are signatories of this letter.

We are asking for a brief phone call with you or the appropriate staff members to discuss an innovative policy idea to support "high road" restaurants. While we are in agreement with the industry as a whole that the state should provide rent and tax abatement (and other aid) to save restaurant jobs, we propose that there be additional relief for restaurateurs willing to commit to



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providing One Fair Wage - a full minimum wage to tipped workers, with tips on top - and paid sick leave, when they reopen once the crisis is over.

Our coalition is poised and ready to provide any restaurant willing to make this commitment with training and financial tools to help transition to this model post-crisis. Training could take place while their businesses are closed over the next several months. The State could provide property, payroll, or liquor tax abatements, grants, loans, or other assistance, that would allow the state's most responsible businesses to thrive after the crisis.

We ask that the state use its resources to support the kinds of employers who support workers, in line with your consistent pro-worker and pro-business approach to public policy. If we are able to support "high road" employers, we in turn support the workers they employ and their families. We need to make sure that the employers who treat their workers well and pay them fairly are able to survive this crisis and can rebuild sooner rather than later.

Enacting proactive rent and tax incentives now, to protect struggling restaurants that specifically commit to enacting pro-worker policies, like a full minimum wage, could be a feasible way to support the industry, support workers, and build the kind of sustainable economy New York State needs when this crisis is in the rear-view mirror.

Please let us know when you are available to discuss this proposal.

Sincerely,

New York RAISE Restaurants

Elisa Lyew, Elisa's Love Bites

Mutale Kanyanta, Locals Brooklyn

Brian Keyser, Casellula

Steve Wong, Oxalis

Marie Tribouilloy, Ops

Stephanie Gross, Wonderville

Ioana Herberg, La Cantine

Ingrid Ammann, Mad Tropical

Leo Tineo, The Sampler

Greg Curley, Abe's Pagoda Bar and The Double Windsor

Scott Hawley, Otis

Paul Cacici, Carmenta's Italian specialties

Julian Mohamed



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Darren Grenia, Omar Barriga and Richard Varela, Yours Sincerely
Dimitri Blackstone-Karapanos and Stacy Grenia, Archie's Bar and Pizza
Gavin Morse, Darkness Ventures
Henry Glucroft, Sunrise/sunset and Petra
Rachel Allswang, Le Garage
Sabrina De Sousa, Dimes
Laura Regan, Outerborougharts LLC