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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

September 16, 2020

Dear Governor Wolf:

I greatly value the leadership you have given Pennsylvania throughout the COVID-19 emergency and the many tough decisions you have been called to make. There is no question that your actions saved many lives and reduced the damage wrought by the virus.

Last week you announced relaxed guidance for restaurants so they may operate at 50% of capacity rather than 25%, beginning on Sept. 21. This change will make a positive difference for thousands of small businesses that are struggling to hang on and stay open. It shows once again that you are basing decisions on the best medical advice, available data, and lessons learned from the actions of other states.

I write to ask you to consider those same factors to modify one aspect of the guidance for restaurants: the requirement that restaurants' last call for alcohol sales be no later than 10 p.m. I believe it would be prudent to allow restaurant alcohol sales to extend until at least 11 p.m. in order to give diners more time to enjoy late meals. More time to serve customers would reduce the need to seat more people earlier in the evening, meaning less crowding. It also would offer increased work hours for employees who have been hit hard by reduced wages and tips. They are eager to work more and modifying this part of the guidance would allow that to happen.

Setting a definite time for restaurants' last call helps to control the risk of spreading the dangerous virus, and I believe that Pennsylvania establishments are equipped to handle at least one additional hour of flexibility while they follow the other mitigation steps that remain in place. Many of these business owners have reached out to legislators seeking this adjustment in the guidance and we believe it is sensible.

Therefore, before the new restaurant guidelines take effect on Sept. 21, I respectfully ask you to consider adjusting the hours for alcohol sales to offer each of these businesses a little more flexibility to decide what will be best in their own situation. I also look forward to continuing to work with you on other steps to protect people while preserving the viability of Pennsylvania businesses. Thank you for your consideration and thank you again for your inspired leadership during one of the most challenging periods in our Commonwealth's history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Dermody".

Frank Dermody
House Democratic Leader