



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

July 21, 2020

Governor Larry Hogan  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan,

We write in response to recent demands by numerous Democrat elected officials that you reapply significant statewide restrictions on Maryland's restaurants and bars. The misplaced assumption behind these demands is that these businesses are the cause of the recent increase in COVID positive test results among the low risk population of young adults under the age of 35. These demands are doubly misplaced.

First, now is not the time for irrational, punitive actions. We should maintain the steady course you have set. We are seeing significant and consistently favorable COVID-related data in Maryland – death rates have declined from a daily high of over 160 in May to under 10, hospitalization rates have been cut by two-thirds, and we have relatively low positivity rates across the board.

Second, Democrat leaders' demands completely ignore the reality of their own actions over the past month and seek to scapegoat small business owners. While imposing crippling restrictions on employers and citizens engaged in necessary daily activities, these politicians have supported, encouraged, and attended mass gatherings of those most impacted by the recent increase in positive tests.

While we strongly support the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment rights of all who demonstrate peacefully, it is clear that the state's prohibition on mass gatherings has been completely ignored since at least Memorial Day when it involved protests. All the while, the vast majority of restaurant and bar owners have been carefully complying with all COVID related rules and regulations.

Civis Analytics estimates that 15 to 26 million young Americans joined protests over the course of the last two months. The Washington Metropolitan area, including Maryland's most populous counties, has been the epicenter for many of these protests with hundreds of thousands of young people engaging in mass gatherings in this area. It is beyond debate that participants in these mass gatherings were exposed to COVID repeatedly as they traveled, lodged, and congregated in support. Logic dictates that we should expect a sizeable increase in COVID positive following such events. Yet Democrat leaders have once again turned to punish their favorite target - Maryland's small businesses.

To be clear - we are not suggesting any restriction on the 1st Amendment rights of Marylanders to protest, but to ensure that the rise in COVID in this under 35 age group is in context, something that has been lacking in press reports nationwide.

If any bars and restaurants are not complying with required safety measures, then local health departments should take appropriate action, including shutting down establishments that refuse to comply.

However, in our collective experience, the establishments we have patronized or seen in our communities have been operating responsibly.

Local leaders should continue to respect the Constitutional right of peaceful assembly, but with the common sense understanding that large gatherings will increase coronavirus numbers and young people should be made aware of the health risk.

We respectfully ask you to resist short-sighted demands to re-enact further restrictions or closures of bars and restaurants and ignore partisan attempts to scapegoat them. As always, we remain committed to working with you and your administration to encourage safety and responsibility.

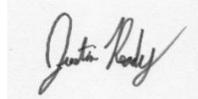
Sincerely,



Sen. Jack Bailey



Sen. Jason Gallion



Sen. Justin Ready



Sen. Mary Beth Carozza



Sen. Stephen Hershey, Jr.



Sen. Johnny Ray Salling



Sen. Robert Cassilly



Sen. Michael Hough



Sen. Andrew Serafini



Sen. Adelaide Eckardt



Sen. J.B. Jennings



Sen. Bryan Simonaire



Sen. George Edwards



Sen. Edward Reilly



Sen. Christopher West