

October 15, 2020

*The Honorable Ned Lamont
Governor, State of Connecticut
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106*

*The Honorable Martin Looney
Senate President Pro Tempore
Legislative Office Building, Room 3300
Hartford, CT 06106*

*The Honorable Bob Duff
Senate Majority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 3300
Hartford, CT 06106*

*The Honorable Len Fasano
Senate Minority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 3402
Hartford, CT 06106*

*The Honorable Joe Aresimowicz
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building, Room 4105
Hartford, CT 06106*

*The Honorable Matt Ritter
House Majority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 4106
Hartford, CT 06106*



*The Honorable Themis Klarides
House Minority Leader
Legislative Office Building, Room 4200
Hartford, CT 06106*

To the Honorable Governor Lamont and Leaders of the General Assembly:

As you know, Connecticut businesses continue to be severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Across every sector, employers have operated under extreme uncertainty for more than seven months, finding new ways to operate while also keeping their employees and customers safe. These efforts have been particularly difficult for Connecticut's many small businesses, who last year collectively employed more than 730,000 people in our state. Given the unique impact of the pandemic on these employers and their employees, we write today to request that resources be made available from existing federal CARES Act funding to directly support Connecticut small businesses, and to help ensure they can and will be a key part of our state's economic recovery in the months and years ahead.

In March, the CARES Act stimulus bill was passed by Congress and signed into law, sending nearly \$1.4 billion dollars to Connecticut. It is our understanding that while much of this funding has been allocated or earmarked, hundreds of millions of unallocated dollars remain. The creation of a new small business grant program with \$70 million in funding (approximately 5% of Connecticut's total stimulus funding) would send a lifeline to thousands of local businesses that are struggling to remain open right now. These businesses cannot wait for additional action from Congress -- they need access to available federal funding, and they need it now.

Connecticut's neighboring states are already taking clear steps with their own federal stimulus allocations to help their small businesses. Rhode Island's "Restore RI" program has set aside \$60 million for small businesses that have experienced a revenue loss due to COVID-19 of at least 30%. And just this week, New Jersey announced a new \$100 million program of a similar nature. These states and others are recognizing that waiting for additional federal action on a second stimulus is no longer a viable option, and that the economic cost of letting more small businesses fail will far outpace the cost of a modest grant program.

Connecticut does not need to mimic any specific model, but there are key elements that should be part of our program. For instance, both Rhode Island and New Jersey use an appropriate ceiling of 50 full-time employees in their criteria; a cap that is any lower than 50 would leave far too many businesses out in the cold. Additionally, both states find ways to acknowledge that the hospitality industry has been uniquely harmed by COVID, offering some additional help to these businesses while still keeping the program open to all sectors.

Connecticut has been a national leader in combating the COVID-19 crisis, and we commend your work as state leaders to understand that Connecticut can prioritize public health without losing sight of its economic future. We can continue to be leaders in these areas now by creating a new grant program to aid small businesses in need. Thank you for your consideration, and we are at your disposal if we can provide additional insight or information.

Sincerely,



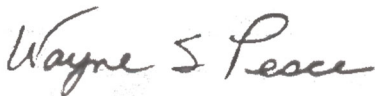
Chris DiPentima | President & CEO
Connecticut Business & Industry Association



Robert Murdock | President
CT Convention & Sports Bureau



Shiran Nicholson | President & Founder
CT Event Industry Coalition



Wayne Pesce | President
CT Food Association



Ginny Kozlowski | Executive Director
CT Lodging Association



Mary Ellen Dombrowski | President
CT River Valley Chamber of Commerce



Scott Dolch | Executive Director
CT Restaurant Association
CONNECTICUT
Restaurant
ASSOCIATION

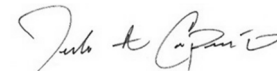
Timothy G. Phelan | President
CT Retail Merchants Association



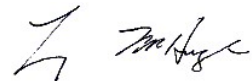
Steven Tagliatela | President
CT Tourism Coalition



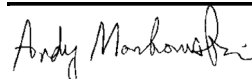
Tony Sheridan | President
Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut



Julio A. Concepcion | Executive Director
Hartford Chamber of Commerce
HARTFORD
★ **CHAMBER**
OF COMMERCE



Larry McHugh
President
Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce



Andrew Markowski | Connecticut State Director
National Federation of Independent Business

