



For Immediate Release
June 2, 2020

MLBA to Governor: Bars and restaurants should open for indoor dining

(St. Paul) --- The Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association (MLBA) represents Minnesota’s small, family-owned liquor retailers, both on-sale (of bars and restaurants) and off-sale (at liquor stores). Today Executive Director Tony Chesak made the following statement:

“Minnesota bars and restaurants are ready to be safely opened as soon as possible for indoor dining. We have preparedness plans, have significant experience working with strong safety regulations, and will protect our customers, staff, and vendors.

Minnesota’s hospitality industry has met **every** request from the Governor’s office and the Department of Employment and Economic Development, offering guidance on safety measures and an opening “play book”– and yet, have still have not received a date for re-opening. Other states in the Midwest – including Michigan, Ohio and Indiana – are all re-opening or have opened their indoor dining at a minimum 50% capacity.

Minnesota’s bars and restaurants can safely serve customers, just as other retailers in the state are doing right now. Big box retailers have been serving hundreds of thousands of people ever since the Emergency Order began. Other non-food-based retailers are open for indoor service – and even the World’s Largest Candy Store in Jordan, Minn. Clearly, the regulations for closing all indoor service at bars and restaurants are not based on science.

Patio-only service is not acceptable as many bars and restaurants do not have a patio or time to wait for municipalities to change their code, or can predict the weather. During the past month of extensive and robust conversations with DEED and hospitality leaders including myself, there was no discussion with industry leaders about “patio only” service. Also, the expense of opening this outside-only service for the minimal amount of people that can be served does not make economic sense and is more of a hardship. It also does not help our customers who are demanding additional indoor services.

Business health is part of public health, and bars and restaurants CAN safely open for indoor service and follow the precautions and structure being put in place. Governor, let bars and restaurants re-open indoor service. We can do this safely. Our customers and employees are our lifeblood and we want them safe and healthy as much as you do. The time to do this is now. We are ready and cannot wait much longer. Thirty-nine other states have trusted their hospitality industries. Do the same.”

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