

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
MARYLAND

SH-110 HART SENATE OFFICE
BUILDING WASHINGTON DC 20510
OFFICE (202) 224-4654
FAX (202) 228-0629

APPROPRIATIONS
BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS
BUDGET
FOREIGN RELATIONS

United States Senate

August 6, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

I write to you regarding the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF), which was established by the American Rescue Plan to provide critical relief to restaurants, bars, and other small businesses in the food and beverage services sector. In light of the extraordinary demand for the program, I urge you to replenish the RRF to meet the current need among eligible applicants.

The food and beverage industries have been among the hardest-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with restaurant and food service sales down \$280 billion from expected levels and restaurant jobs down 1.7 million from pre-pandemic levels. Even as restrictions are being lifted and the economy continues to rebound, restaurants are only just beginning to recover from the devastating economic impact of the pandemic. In Maryland and across the country, restaurants continue to experience decreased sales, staffing shortages, and significant debt burdens. With the rise of the Delta variant, reservations nationwide have declined in recent weeks, as customers have exhibited increased hesitancy about dining indoors. Numerous restaurant owners in Maryland have told us that they need federal relief to recover from the past 17 months and navigate the uncertainty that lies ahead. Many of these businesses may close their doors permanently if they don't receive help.

The \$28.6 billion RRF has already started working to keep tens of thousands of these establishments across the nation open, and has provided a lifeline to over 2,000 businesses in Maryland. However, demand has far outstripped the available funding. On July 2, 2021, Small Business Administration (SBA) Administrator Isabel Guzman announced the closure of the RRF program. SBA reported that they had received more than 278,000 eligible applications requesting a total of \$72.2 billion in funding. As of June 30, 2021, approximately 101,000 of those applications had been approved, leaving over 177,000 thousand businesses out in the cold, including over 3,300 businesses from Maryland.

I urge you to bring up for a vote S. 2091, the *Restaurant Revitalization Fund Replenishment Act of 2021*, which would provide the RRF with an additional \$60 billion in funding to meet the outstanding demand for the program. Maryland's restaurants play a major role in the state's economy,

STATE OFFICES

ROCKVILLE OFFICE
111 ROCKVILLE PIKE
SUITE 960
ROCKVILLE, MD 20850
PHONE (301) 545-1500
FAX (301) 545-1512

ANNAPOLIS OFFICE
60 WEST STREET
SUITE 107
ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401
PHONE (410) 263-1325

CAMBRIDGE OFFICE
204 CEDAR STREET
SUITE 200C
CAMBRIDGE, MD 21613

BALTIMORE OFFICE
1900 NORTH HOWARD STREET
SUITE 100
BALTIMORE, MD 21218
PHONE (667) 212-4610
FAX (667) 212-4618

HAGERSTOWN OFFICE
32 WEST WASHINGTON STREET
SUITE 203
HAGERSTOWN, MD 21750
PHONE (301) 797-2826

LARGO OFFICE
1101 MERCANTILE LANE
SUITE 210
LARGO, MD 20774
PHONE (301) 322-6560

employing over 259,000 people prior to the pandemic and spurring over \$13 billion in sales in the state. Failing to provide restaurants and bars with the relief they need could bring another wave of restaurant closures, jeopardize jobs, damage already tenuous supply chains, and harm local communities.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator