



## NEW JERSEY LICENSED BEVERAGE ASSOCIATION, INC.

*The Original Tavern, Bar and Restaurant Association of New Jersey  
established 1933*

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## NJLBA Urges Governor to Consider Immediate Re-Opening Indoor Dining Plan for Bars, Taverns and Restaurants

**New Brunswick --** The New Jersey Licensed Beverage Association (NJLBA) today called on Governor Phil Murphy to immediately begin phasing in indoor dining and beverage services at the state's bars, restaurants and taverns. Currently, under the state's reopening plans, licensed establishments will not be allowed to welcome back patrons inside until late June or early July and according to the NJLBA that will trigger bankruptcy for many of its members. Scores of licensees are going under every day they are not open.

According to Diane Weiss, Association Executive Director, it's critical for licensees to begin an immediate, phased-in opening for interior food and beverage service at safe limited capacity levels if they are to remain viable businesses.

"We have always maintained the highest safety standards in our industry, and we will continue to do so, going above and beyond the guidelines established by the CDC. We need our government stakeholders to trust that we will continue to do this and allow for an expedited opening for inside dining, before our establishments go bankrupt," Weiss stated.

During the past three months, licensed establishments have been working to adjust their indoor and outdoor dining areas to accommodate new social distancing guidelines. However, not all licensees have access to outdoor seating, or cannot accommodate them due to location, making it imperative that indoor dining also be allowed under the reduced capacity.

Weiss added that, "Our members' establishments will adhere to best practices as outlined by the CDC, something they are well versed in regardless of COVID-19. We are 100 percent confident that they can successfully operate their businesses while keeping customers and staff safe thanks to the appropriate PPE and we would hope by now that the Governor has faith in our ability to do so."

Vinnie Brand, owner of the Stress Factory in New Brunswick, explained that July and August are simply not outdoor dining months for the cities and only opening outdoor dining will result in more bankruptcies for these areas. Sadly, many of the states minority business owners are in our cities, the losses will hurt twice as much during this time and they will go unnoticed.

Association President Jim Filler, owner of Dadz Bar & Grill, Lumberton, explained that every day that passes where a business remains shuttered is another day closer to 100's of licensed premises that will not reopen at all.



*"Representing the on-premise licensed beverage retailers, the heart of the hospitality industry"*

Filler noted that industry experts have projected that at least a quarter of the state's current active liquor licenses may never reopen due to the severe financial damage caused by the Covid-19 virus.

"Our industry was by far one of the hardest hit by the pandemic," he said. The sudden closure of our establishments resulted in unemployment for bartenders, wait staff and other employees. While many licensees tried to remain open by offering take-out options, many others were forced to close because it was simply not possible to survive on the reduced income.

"Our businesses are fighting to survive," Filler added. "The government has trusted us to run safe licensed establishments since 1933. By putting trust in us again and putting in place a workable reopening plan, our businesses will have a stronger chance of existing after these unprecedented times pass."

There are approximately 350,000 employees in the New Jersey hospitality industry.

Established in 1933, the NJLBA is a statewide trade association representing over 6,000 on-premise liquor license holders throughout the state of New Jersey.

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