

Alaska Cabaret, Hotel,
Restaurant and Retailers Association



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March 24, 2020

Dear Honorable Members of the 31st Alaska Legislature:

The Alaska Cabaret, Hotel, Restaurant, and Retailers Association (Alaska CHARR) represents over 750 members of the hospitality industry statewide, many of which are small businesses.

The impacts of COVID-19 have reverberated throughout the state, with few industries being hit harder than tourism and hospitality. Alaskan businesses – particularly smaller ones – have already felt the impacts. These are the places you celebrate your birthdays, sports victories, marriages, anniversaries, and even just the places you go to get away from the stresses of life. They are the heart of every community across our great state and right now, many are struggling to survive.

This will inevitably be one the worst Alaska tourism seasons in decades, which will be detrimental to our state, as only oil brings more dollars into Alaska each year. Preliminary survey results of the economic impact to the hospitality industry are dire; I expect that some Alaskan businesses will not recover from this, yet Alaska CHARR and our many friends and partners are fighting tirelessly to ensure that as many as possible will remain operating for years to come.

The number one necessity for small businesses right now is immediate cash flow. Currently, the only option is to apply for Disaster Loan Assistance through the U.S. Small Business Administration. There are many issues with this option: considering the circumstances, the 3.75% interest rate is high; the federal program is being inundated with tens of thousands of requests from across the country; the application process is cumbersome and clunky; payments will likely take many weeks or even months to reach businesses who need immediate assistance; and not all businesses qualify.

I implore you to support the Alaska hospitality industry when it needs you the most by passing legislation that will allow small businesses to apply for and receive grants from the State of Alaska – and to do so expeditiously – so that we might collectively turn our attention to surviving this crisis – both in health and in business.

If I can provide any information or answer questions, please contact me.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued efforts during these challenging times.

Very respectfully,

Sarah D. Oates
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