



STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES  
BUREAU OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND LOTTERY OPERATIONS  
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AUGUSTA, MAINE 04330-0008

KIRSTEN LC FIGUEROA  
COMMISSIONER

JANET T. MILLS  
GOVERNOR

GREGORY R. MINEO  
DIRECTOR

November 2, 2020

Dear Friends,

As you are no doubt aware, in light of increasing COVID-19 cases in Maine, the Mills Administration announced yesterday a series of actions to prevent and mitigate further spread of the virus, including the postponed reopening of bars and tasting rooms for indoor service, previously anticipated today. I understand that this announcement is a tremendous disappointment at best and potentially devastating at worst. I know that you have been looking forward to welcoming patrons back inside for many months, and that many of you were depending on this day for the life and livelihood of your business.

Unfortunately, Maine and states nationwide recorded significant increases in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and positivity rates over the last week. Maine recorded 103 new cases of COVID-19 on Friday, the highest single-day increase since the beginning of the pandemic. Maine's 7-day positivity rate has doubled over the last two weeks.

So many of us enjoy bars and tasting rooms because they are a place for friends to gather and boisterously share our lives and laughter, over a drink of choice. Unfortunately, as we know all too well by now, the examples of other states and scientific evidence indicate that the unique environment of bars and tasting rooms – gathering with people outside our households, in enclosed spaces, not wearing a mask, and talking loudly – are substantial risks for COVID-19 transmission. Taken with the rapid rise in new COVID-19 cases, Governor Mills has determined that Maine cannot bear that risk. When announcing the decision, the Governor said the following:

“To the business owners and employees of bars and tasting rooms, I am deeply sorry that we have been forced to make this decision to postpone your reopening to prevent the further spread of the virus. I know that you were ready and willing to follow public health guidance to keep yourselves and Maine people safe. We realize that this decision will cause hardship. We do not take this action lightly, but the rapid rise in cases in just the past six days means that we cannot in good conscience proceed with the planned reopening. My Administration will continue to do all we can to support Maine's small businesses and hardworking families through these challenging times and will continue to seek further financial relief from Congress for Maine businesses who have lost so much already.”

Amid these arduous and uncertain times for your business, my staff and I, along with our counterparts in DECD, have counseled many of you over the course of this pandemic. Some of you received direct relief during the first round of DECD's Maine Economic Recovery Grant Program and others applied for relief under the second expanded round. Award decisions for those who applied for relief in the second round of the grant program will be made in the coming weeks. For those who qualified and received them, I hope those funds have provided some assistance during these challenging times. We continue to stand ready to support you.

I know that you are also concerned for the health of Mainers who patronize establishments that hold restaurant licenses but, in some cases, more closely mirror the typical intimate and/or lively nature of a bar or tasting room. The grave natures of this virus – and its renewed impact here in Maine – require strict adherence to the established public health and safety measures, and incidences of non-compliance are of vital concern to us. Please do not hesitate to connect with my team at BABLO and/or our counterparts at DHHS if you are aware of such activity.

I hope that it may offer you some small bit of consolation that all of us – BABLO, the Governor’s Office, DECD, this entire Administration – are aware of the gravity of this decision. We will continue the fight against COVID-19 in hopes of a robust return-to-normal sooner than later and, in the meantime, are committed to identifying creative ways to support you and your employees through to the other side of this global pandemic. Please continue to reach out to me and my team at BABLO with any suggestions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gregory R. Mineo".

Gregory R. Mineo  
Director  
Bureau of Beverage and Lottery Operations