

MAX ROSE  
11TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK  
1529 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
TELEPHONE: (202) 225-3371  
STATEN ISLAND OFFICE:  
265 NEW DORP LANE, SECOND FLOOR  
STATEN ISLAND, NY 10308  
TELEPHONE: (718) 667-3313  
BROOKLYN OFFICE:  
8203 3RD AVENUE  
BROOKLYN, NY 11209

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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SUBCOMMITTEES:  
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August 19, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Governor Cuomo,

We write to you on a bipartisan basis to ask that you allow indoor dining for Staten Island restaurants at a reduced capacity. New York's successful re-opening has provided a wealth of evidence and information, as have the failures elsewhere around the world, that we can reopen right. While we understand there may be justifiable concern about the Mayor's leadership, we are asking you to not trust in him, but the small business owners who have already proven themselves willing and able to operate safely.

Geographically speaking, and in consideration of Staten Island's lack of public transportation infrastructure, Staten Island *IS* an entity unto itself with respect to virus containment. We lack the density you see in other parts in New York City and resemble other portions of the state that have already been approved for indoor dining. Our borough has met the required metrics—according to [New York State Department of Health data](#), since August 2, the county's 7-day rolling average of positive test results was 1.2 percent or less, with the positive rate yesterday dropping to just .6 percent on Staten Island. In fact, data from yesterday, August 18, shows Staten Island has one of the lowest numbers of new positive cases by county in the state, with numbers closer to Rockland County than the Bronx. And yet we see Westchester County, Nassau County, and other nearby counties gain access to indoor dining options while Staten Island, the most geographically isolated borough from the rest of the city, is left out to dry. When counties meet required metrics, as we've seen across the state—business owners have been allowed to resume indoor dining options. We urge you to do no less for Staten Island.

In our conversations with constituents, it is growing difficult for our small business owners to maintain faith in the painstakingly crafted guidelines put forward by the state, especially when they are excluded for opening indoor dining, not because of any demonstrative health risk, but because of where they are located. This patchwork of rules not only erodes trust, but it is economically devastating. Restaurants are the backbone of our city's economy, and Staten Island business owners are following the rules, and doing everything right. As other indoor activities like bowling are allowed to resume, it is an insult to block similar businesses from allowing their

patrons indoors. Based on the evidence we are seeing elsewhere in the state, there is not a justifiable reason to prevent reduced capacity indoor dining for Staten Island.

Millions of students are preparing to physically return to school while thousands of Staten Islanders travel out of state to New Jersey and elsewhere as they patronize out of state restaurants, shops, and even participate in out of state youth sports programs, only to return to New York on a daily basis. Opening restaurants locally will not only spur economic gain in our communities, but also lowers the risk of importing the virus from other states. Moreover, a continued delay in opening up our restaurants will cause irreparable harm to our local businesses, their families, and our entire community.

We understand the threat COVID-19 still poses for our constituents. If there are any signs that our hard-fought victory over this disease is slipping, we are confident you will move swiftly to keep our constituents safe – with the full support of all New Yorkers. Our state showed the world there is a way to successfully reopen. All we are asking is that Staten Island restaurants be given the opportunity to prove that New York City can do it correctly as well.

Finally, we invite you to Staten Island to personally meet with us, together with local restaurant owners, so that you can see firsthand the impact of the closure as well as the safety protocol measures our restaurant owners are able to put in place for the safety of their patrons

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'mrose', followed by a long horizontal line.

Max Rose  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Lanza'.

Andrew J. Lanza  
New York State Senator