

I'm writing as a first generation Cuban American restaurant owner with continued concern over my business and the industry I've dedicated my entire adult life to. I am grateful for your service to our communities, and your action to allow for cocktails to-go during the current state of emergency. But the hospitality and beverage industry is still in jeopardy and is an essential part of our communities. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is long term, and will not simply pass.

The hospitality industry by far has been the top sector financially affected by this pandemic. The legislative body must act and make legislative changes such as allowing Cocktails To-Go to become permanent, and help our industry. This is just one of the tools we need to help bolster Oregon's hospitality industry, which represents over 40% of Oregon's jobs lost.

As we pass the one year mark from Governor Brown's Executive Order 20-12, and with the move of fifteen counties back into the extreme risk category, the temporary closures of restaurants and bars are continuing to become permanent. I support the health standards set by the state, which are necessary and vital steps to protect our staff and communities from the spread of COVID. Unfortunately, revenue from take-out and delivery does not make up for dine-in losses, especially for restaurants paying high rent on large unusable square footage. PPP loans have been a lifeline for restaurants, but we now know it is only short term relief to a long term problem. We need to find immediate solutions for long term stability.

Prior to the temporary order, I was asked on numerous occasions "What difference will this make?" I will tell you first hand that it has made a difference. Cocktails to-go has been one of the many lifelines we have needed to help my business survive. Over the past four months our online sales for pickup and delivery increased by 10x's compared to previous months when it was not permitted. It has allowed us to cover many costs, including payroll and rent to minimize our losses during these difficult times.

The time to act is now. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ricky Gomez
Owner / Operator
Palomar