

# Vote YES on SB 125

March 18, 2020, the restaurant industry in the state of Utah closed over 3,000 dining rooms. With an Emergency Order in place restaurants responded and ceased operations with 48 hours notice. Employee's left with food and the hope that they would be back when the industry re-opened. During the ordered 58-day closure Utah's restaurant industry dropped from 111,000 employees to 63,000 cutting our workforce in half.

May 7, 2020, it was announced that restaurants could re-open, however with 6-foot distancing, masks, and other restrictions the industry was operating at 30% to 40% of normal occupancy. In a matter of one to two days restaurants were welcoming the public back with over 2,500 restaurants opening on the same day in May of 2020. Several restaurants in the state were not able to re-open on this date and over 250 restaurants closed permanently!

During 2020 restaurant sales dipped dramatically with restaurants losing over \$1 Billion Dollars in sales. Some employees returned as restaurants opened however the industry today is still 8-10% below their pre-pandemic employment numbers. PPP was an attempt to keep people employed, however with closings ordered in March and PPP not approved until June many employees had already left and with enhanced unemployment payments (paying people not to work) many workers chose to take advantage of the additional payments and other subsidies offered for food, transportation, and housing and have not re-entered the workforce. 1,469 restaurants in the state of Utah applied for Restaurant Revitalization Funding totaling \$332 million dollars. Only 436 restaurants received RRF grants which means that over 1,000 restaurants did not receive any financial assistance.

Members of the Board of the Utah Restaurant Association met with Senator Harper to ask his support of legislation to provide an incentive to encourage people to get back into the workforce and the concept of SB 125 was in the making. Formats of legislation in other states was reviewed and the legislation for Utah was defined. Utah's restaurant industry asks you to support our efforts to incentivize and reward those who are working to help Utah's restaurant industry recover from the impacts of the Pandemic.

The challenges facing Utah's restaurant industry will be on-going and recovery continues. Many restaurants are operating by reducing the number of days they are open and the number of hours they operate each day. Utah's restaurant industry pre-pandemic was the nations 6<sup>th</sup> fastest growing industry with over \$6.5 Billion dollars in sales contributing over \$270 million in tax revenue to the state and providing an additional \$60 million in TRCC taxes to local counties. Restaurants need to turn their tables one and a half times on weekdays and two to three times a night on weekends. Many people report that restaurants are packed and under their current limitations, they are. Longer prep times, along with delays in service equal less opportunity to turn tables.

With your help the recovery process for restaurants can be expedited with improved workforce levels.

**The Utah Restaurant Association asks you to VOTE YES SB 125!**

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