



December 15, 2020

Mayor Rogers and City Councilmembers

Santa Rosa City Hall

100 Santa Rosa Avenue

Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Dear Mayor Rogers and City Councilmembers,

The California Restaurant Association (CRA) is the definitive voice of the food service community in California representing over 22,000 food service establishments. Restaurants are highly regulated businesses which, in a good economic climate, operate on very thin economic margins.

The global pandemic has financially devastated community restaurants and has dramatically altered restaurant operations. The demands of public health have required us to adapt quickly to ensure physical distancing, address the needs of vulnerable populations, and manage all-to-often periodic shutdowns of in-store and dine-in operations. We have expanded the use of curbside pickup, online order and deliveries and outdoor dining to serve our customers in a safe manner.

These operational changes have significantly impacted how we package our food for customers. With the state allowing- and encouraging- restaurants to continue to serve the public as an “essential business” via take-out and delivery of food orders to consumers, the actual food packaging and food service ware itself has taken on an even more critical role to date.

As the state Department of Public Health dictates the reopening and closing of individual restaurants in counties thru the Blueprint for a Safe Economy, the need for take-out and delivery orders will play an even larger role in serving consumers well into the future. In fact, the state “Guidance for Dine-In Restaurants” is meant to help guide safe restaurant operations and that guidance recommends a prioritization of take-out and delivery while also paving the way to reopen dine-in restaurant operations at a drastically reduced capacity. In either case, the state

issued guidance recommends the use of single-service products at certain times under their “cleaning and disinfecting protocols.”

With indoor dining closed, restaurants are heavily reliant upon take-out, delivery and drive-thru orders. Restricting a restaurant’s ability to provide take-out, delivery and drive-thru customers with straws, lids, cutlery and to-go condiments to consume what they have purchased while in their vehicle or other location will cause significant customer inconvenience, frustration, and backlash towards employees once the guest has left the restaurant or received their food via delivery.

For these reasons, we ask that the proposed ordinance be amended to allow for the compliant non-reusable food service ware accessory items (i.e. straws, drink plugs and utensils) to be distributed “upon offer” of the restaurant.

Not allowing food service establishments to use disposable food service ware would negatively impact the ability of restaurants, cafeterias, delis, coffee houses, and other food/beverage establishments to offer many recyclable or composition options for food service ware. We believe this ordinance would result in unintended environmental impacts. Presumably, with increased use of reusable food service ware we would then see an increase in other utility usage and association costs, such as water and energy usage.

Square footage of established buildings is extremely limited and unchangeable, as most restaurants are located on properties they do not own and therefore are limited in expanding or altering their physical “foodprint”. Many restaurants will be forced to buy and install extra dishwashing appliances in their kitchen to accommodate the dine-in reusable requirements, which will be an extremely expensive task and a near impossible one due to space constraints.

The ongoing pandemic has created uncertainty for restaurants and made it impossible for restaurants to plan for the future. The financial devastation caused by the opening and closing of restaurant operations will take years to overcome. Any new cost increase, no matter how small, will have a detrimental impact upon a restaurants ability to survive in the future.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me direct at khansen@calrest.org.

Sincerely,



Katie Hansen
Senior Legislative Director
California Restaurant Association

