



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 18, 2020

Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board Provides Guidance to Licensees on Mandate to Cease Dine-In Service and On-Premises Consumption or Risk Citation, License Suspension, and Forceable Closure

Harrisburg – The Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board today announced exercise of its authority, with authorization from the Governor, to mandate that all retail licensees, clubs, permittees, and producers must cease the sale of food and alcohol for on-premises consumption, effective at 8:00 PM today and until further notice, in the interest of slowing the spread of the COVID-19 virus and mitigating the unprecedented public health crisis the commonwealth faces.

Any licensee that fails to comply with this mandate now risks citation by the Pennsylvania State Police Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement and suspension of operating authority by the PLCB. Any licensee that continues to operate after its license is suspended risks further enforcement action and closure by the BLCE. Ultimately, citations may put the business's liquor license at risk, both through the citation process and upon application for renewal to the PLCB.

“Medical experts and public health professionals from around the world agree the best step we can take to slow the spread of COVID-19 is to stop gathering in public spaces,” said Board Chairman Tim Holden. “Extraordinary times require extraordinary measures, and this decision is not made lightly. But saving lives and protecting the health and safety of our communities is our highest priority right now.”

The PLCB, upon authorization from the Governor, has the authority under the Liquor Code (47 P.S. §4-462) to mandate the closure of licensed establishments in times of emergency.

Impacts of this mandate on specific license types, effective March 18, 2020, at 8 p.m., are as follows:

- Restaurant, retail dispenser and hotel licensees may not allow the service or consumption of food or alcohol on the licensed premises. Sales to go are still permitted, as are hotel sales of food and alcohol for consumption in a private room.
- Licensees holding wine expanded permits authorizing the sale of wine to go may not allow the service or consumption of food or alcohol on the licensed premises. Sales to go are still permitted, as are the operation of a grocery store, convenience store or gas

station next to the licensed premises.

- Airport restaurant license holders may not allow the service or consumption of food or alcohol on the licensed premises. Sales to go are still permitted.
- Clubs and catering clubs may not allow the service or consumption of food or alcohol on the licensed premises, and such licensees are not authorized to sell any alcohol to go. They may continue selling food to go.
- Permittees including special occasion, off-premise catering, exposition and farmers markets may not allow the service or consumption of food or alcohol on the licensed premises or at public gatherings.
- Breweries, distilleries/limited distilleries, and limited wineries may not allow the service or consumption of food or alcohol on the licensed premises. Sales of the producer's own alcohol for off premises consumption is permitted.
- Sacramental wine licensees may not allow food or beverage consumption on premise but may sell sacramental wine for consumption off premise.

Additionally, the PLCB has received a number of inquiries as to how beer distributors should react to business closure guidance. As suppliers to grocery stores, convenience stores, and other retail licensees permitted to sell beer to go, distributors' continued operation will preserve beer accessibility for consumers. As such, the PLCB is not limiting distributors' operations at this time, but beer distributors are strongly encouraged to employ social distancing best practices and avoid public gatherings of 10 or more people.

Complaints regarding licensees not complying with these mandates may be directed to the Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement at 1-800-932-0602 or reported through the BLCE's [online complaint form](#).

The PLCB will constantly re-evaluate this policy, guided by the strategy developed by the Governor's Office and the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and lift restrictions at the appropriate time. The PLCB regulates the distribution of beverage alcohol in Pennsylvania, operates nearly 600 wine and spirits stores statewide, and licenses 20,000 alcohol producers, retailers, and handlers. The PLCB also works to reduce and prevent dangerous and underage drinking through partnerships with schools, community groups, and licensees. Taxes and store profits – totaling nearly \$18.5 billion since the agency's inception – are returned to Pennsylvania's General Fund, which finances Pennsylvania's schools, health and human services programs, law enforcement, and public safety initiatives, among other important public services. The PLCB also provides financial support for the Pennsylvania State Police Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement, the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, other state agencies, and local municipalities across the state. For more information about the PLCB, visit lcb.pa.gov.