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**October 22, 2020**

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## **Governor Wolf Announces Plan to Waive Liquor License Fees to Provide Financial Relief to Restaurants and Bars**

**Pittsburgh, PA** – Governor Tom Wolf today announced a plan to waive liquor license fees to provide financial relief to restaurants and bars, which have faced significant financial impacts during the COVID-19 public health crisis.

“As we enter the anticipated fall resurgence of COVID-19 cases, the very contagious nature of this virus makes gathering indoors publicly at full capacity dangerous. Still, we know that restaurant and bar owners in Pennsylvania are committed to keeping their employees and customers safe and the vast majority of these businesses have followed safety precautions and invested in new procedures and supplies, but COVID continues to hurt this industry,” Gov. Wolf said. “My administration continues to look for innovative ways that we can support the bar and restaurant industry. Eliminating liquor license fees is an important step toward helping bars and restaurants retain the capital they need to weather the storm of COVID-19.”

Governor Wolf is working with the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board to waive standard licensing fees through 2021 starting January 1, 2021. More than 16,000 Pennsylvania restaurants and bars, clubs, catering clubs and hotels would see \$20 million in relief.

The governor was joined by state Representatives Dan Deasy (D-Allegheny), Ed Gainey (D-Allegheny) and Jake Wheatley (D-Allegheny), and Senator Wayne Fontana (D-Allegheny) at LeMont Restaurant in Pittsburgh.

“I’m glad I could work with Governor Wolf to bring help to our bars, restaurants, taverns and social clubs right now. I know this isn’t a solution to the big problems this pandemic presents, and more help is needed,” said Rep. Deasy. “I’m working hard to enact additional measures that can help keep these vital employers in business.”

“This terrible public health crisis has also stricken our economy and our path to recovery will need to be a well thought out and effective one on several fronts. While the COVID-19 pandemic has affected just about every industry, restaurants and bars have been hit particularly hard and we need to provide relief to these small businesses at the heart of our communities,” said Sen. Fontana. “Over the summer, Senate Democrats introduced a comprehensive proposal to provide emergency relief to Pennsylvania’s restaurants and taverns, which have seen significant financial loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting shutdown. Under our plan, license renewal and permit fees that are paid by restaurants and taverns would be waived for one year along with other administrative changes to help financially benefit these struggling businesses. I’m pleased that the governor is taking steps to implement some of our goals and am encouraged that this will provide meaningful assistance to so many of these establishments that are struggling.”

“This is a step in addressing the concerns that we know that the bars and restaurant community need. I want to thank Governor Wolf for understanding the situation of the bars and restaurants and for offering this plan to waive these fees as we continue to search for solutions to assistance,” Rep. Gainey said. “I know the governor is working hard with our federal officials, as well as our state officials to bring relief to our bars and restaurants.”

“I thank the governor for his constant commitment to help our restaurants and bars,” Rep. Wheatley said. “I look forward to working with our federal legislators and general assembly to get more support for these restaurants.”

“I want to thank the Governor for listening to the concerns of the bar and tavern community,” said Senator Jim Brewster (D-Allegheny/Westmoreland). “They’ve been hurting the last seven months, especially here in Western Pennsylvania. Today’s announcement will provide savings that they desperately need to keep their businesses open, and I hope it’s just one step of what we continue to do at the state level to help our small business folks recover.”

“I understand the financial impact that our small business restaurant and tavern owners have endured during this difficult time and their efforts to ensure the safety of their customers and employees, and I’m grateful that the governor has taken this step to ease that financial burden,” said Rep. Mike Driscoll (D-Philadelphia). “This is one step of many steps that we can and will take to help these local businesses and I will continue to support them as we focus on economic recovery efforts.”

“As new cases of the virus have jumped recently, our priority should be to continue to protect the population, and to provide targeted relief to industries most affected,” said Rep. Steve Malagari (D-Montgomery). “Waiving liquor license fees gives some immediate relief to local businesses, while we wait for our colleagues in the General Assembly to take action to release the \$1 billion remaining CARES Act funding to our communities.”

As part of his fall legislative agenda, Governor Wolf has called on the General Assembly to provide an additional \$225 million in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding in the form of forgivable loans and grants to small businesses in Pennsylvania through the COVID-19 Relief Statewide Small Business Assistance Program. In addition, the governor proposed \$100 million in forgivable loans and grants for the hospitality, leisure and service industries, including restaurants and bars, salons and barber shops.

The governor also supports the federal Real Economic Support That Acknowledges Unique Restaurant Assistance Needed to Survive (RESTAURANTS) Act. The bipartisan bill in Congress provides \$120 billion to help independent restaurants with the economic challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic.