

Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and distinguished members of the Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement and Business Committee, my name is Greg Dugal and I am on Zoom today representing HospitalityMaine and our over 1000 hospitality members testifying neither for nor against LD 1493, a resolve that would create a grant program for seasonal and tourism industry businesses.

We applaud the efforts of the sponsor Senator Rafferty and his 9 co-sponsors. And though we really want and need one more round of grants from the state's portion of The American Rescue Act, we want to make sure that the Department of Economic and Community Development is not encumbered by any legislation that may make it more difficult or delayed. For all intents and purposes the DECD oversaw three rounds of grants already. Two based in the Maine Economic Recovery cycle and another at the end of 2021, the Tourism, Hospitality & Retail Recovery Grant Program, and did an excellent job with limited resources. No one would say that the parameters set for who could receive some of these grants were perfect, but we believe enough was learned by the Department to execute an even better grant program than existed before.

All the money provided by PPP, EIDL and the state grants were critical to the survival of our industry. People tell me every day that they would not still be in business if not for receipt of some or all of these grants. Between this potential grant program and the Restaurant Revitalization fund or RRF (official application came out yesterday,) businesses should get enough capital to restart or ramp up their service to busy summer levels and we would very much appreciate that help, as we have appreciated it all along. Remember things are still not normal at this time and may not be for some time to come. We are still at 50% capacity in restaurants and only increase to 75% on May 24. Also regardless of those capacity percentages, the 6 foot distancing rule makes it impossible to achieve between 60 to 75% occupancy based on physical plant size limitations for most of our restaurant members.

So we are excited for this legislation and the thought that DECD would administer another program to assist us is a great feeling, while also recognizing DECD's ability to execute this program with limited oversight and look forward to that occurring in the near future. Thank for your time and consideration.

Gregory Dugal
HospitalityMaine

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