



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo: State Liquor Authority should not be a 'food czar'

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO July 23, 2020

| ISSUE: **STATE LIQUOR AUTHORITY, CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19; SMALL BUSINESS; REOPENING**

New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, expressed concern today with updated guidance from the State Liquor Authority (SLA) pertaining to what restaurants and bars may serve as “food” to patrons seeking to purchase alcoholic beverages.

The SLA’s revised guidelines come after the Governor mandated that alcohol could only be served to customers who were seated and had ordered food. Restaurants and bars must now sell “sandwiches, soups and other foods” such as salads, wings or hotdogs to customers looking to buy alcohol, according to the revised guidance. Items such as bags of chips, nuts or candy do not meet the requirements.

“While I understand the intention of the Governor’s original directive and believe that certain procedures to limit and hopefully stop the spread of COVID-19 must be followed, some have rightfully questioned what difference it makes if they order a burger and beer or a cocktail and a bag of chips,” Sen. Griffo said. “The SLA’s role is to issue licenses and permits and ensure compliance with the Alcoholic Beverage Law. It should not be acting as a ‘food czar’ and determining what are valid food options that can be served at local establishments.”

Sen. Griffo is calling on the SLA to rescind its updated guidance. He also will contact restaurant associations and organizations in the state to ascertain whether they can pursue legal action if the SLA refuses to do so.

“Many restaurants and bars have successfully implemented protocols to protect the health and ensure the safety of patrons,” Sen. Griffo said. “This updated guidance from the SLA, however, is only adding to the confusion, consternation and challenges that many establishments are already experiencing. Our small businesses have already suffered enough through no fault of their own. The state should not be making it more difficult for them.”

Sen. Griffo also expressed dismay with the Governor’s recent statements that outdoor drinking is not authorized at restaurants and bars.

“I understand that the coronavirus pandemic is an ever-changing situation and that things can change at a moment’s notice,” Sen. Griffo said. “However, the Governor, as a result of another unclear directive, has once again caused unneeded confusion for the owners of bars, restaurants and other establishments who are already struggling. These small businesses need clear and concise guidance, as I have advocated for in the past, so that they know how they can operate. Let’s help them, not hinder them.”

Sen. Griffo continues to advocate for restaurants, bars and other small businesses during the coronavirus pandemic, including introducing legislation (S8452) that would provide the SLA with the necessary statutory authority to provide a credit on liquor license renewals for bars and restaurants reflecting the amount of time for which they were shut down due to COVID-19. Additional legislation (S8303), which repeals the state’s prohibition on barbering on Sundays, is expected to be passed by the Senate today. The bill provides barbershops and hair salons with an option that can help them recover economically, position them to recoup

financial losses and provide New Yorkers with additional access to certain personal care services.

The Senator also continues to speak directly to the Governor's office on the behalf of businesses in his district.