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Dear Mrs. Graf:

Thank you for contacting me to support assistance for the restaurant industry in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic. I appreciate hearing from you and apologize for the delayed response.

I share your concern and recognize the desperate need of the restaurant industry in Maryland for economic support during this crisis. In Maryland alone, nearly 150,000 restaurant employees lost their jobs and 40% of all restaurants - 4,500 businesses – had to close. I supported the small business relief programs in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the additional Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) funding passed by Congress. Unfortunately, unnecessary red tape and poor administration of these programs by the Treasury Department and Small Business Administration dulled the overall impact the PPP and EIDL programs should have had on businesses throughout Maryland.

That is why I pushed the Treasury and SBA numerous times to revise their guidance and rulemakings. I was proud to support the PPP technical assistance bill recently passed into law. This piece of legislation provided much needed changes to the PPP that will assist the restaurant industry in weathering this crisis. The bill extends the expense forgiveness period from eight weeks to 24 weeks, reduces the payroll ratio requirement to 60 percent, increases the loan repayment period from two to five years on new loans, allows payroll tax deferment for PPP recipients, and extends the June 30 rehiring deadline.

In addition to continued efforts to make much-needed changes to the PPP, Congress needs to enact a comprehensive and flexible program that reaches all hard hit employers. To address this need, I introduced the Rebuilding Main Street Act, which would allow employers to share their payroll costs with the federal government and receive a grant for a portion of their other costs to weather the storm and reopen when it is safe to do so.

Despite these efforts and the resilience of the restaurant industry, restaurants and bars across Maryland will require significant support for the remainder of the pandemic. Please be assured that I will continue to seek input from restaurant and bar owners from across the state in determining additional steps needed to help the industry survive this crisis.

Again, thank you for sharing your thoughts with me. Please do not hesitate to contact me whenever I may be of service.

**Incoming:**

Thank you for the leadership you've shown in the face of this pandemic. And to your staff members reading this, thank you for all the work you're putting in right now.

I'm urging you to immediately create a relief program for the restaurant industry and its millions of workers.

Nationwide, over 15 million people work in this industry, many without paid sick leave or health insurance. There have been sweeping layoffs and these workers access to unemployment benefits has been uneven. They need government aid in the form of ongoing universal basic income, and relief from rent and protection from eviction. They will not have an easy time finding work in the restaurant industry any time soon.

Small and medium restaurant businesses need immediate rent abatement, tax deferrals, eviction protection, and money. Please create a relief fund these small- and medium-businesses can access, with money they do not owe back.

Do not let a bailout happen that only lets giant fast-food companies survive. McDonalds has deep pockets. Your favorite neighborhood restaurant doesn't.

Sincerely,

Chris Van Hollen

United States Senator

P.S. Please visit my [website](#), where you can learn more about legislation that I have sponsored or co-sponsored and receive information on the important constituent services provided by my

office. Additionally, you can read more [here](#) about my work to respond to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), how to stay safe, and the resources available to help you.