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Subject: Please consider decreasing restaurant capacity

Dear All,

I am writing this on Christmas Eve as I think about how the dining capacity reduction will negatively impact my loved ones. This is normally a time I reflect on what I am most thankful for (my hardworking staff, healthy family, my dogs of course) however what my thoughts are consumed by is concern for my businesses, family, staff, business partners, and community. Not only will the capacity reduction impact sales and impose the possibility of closing due to the inability to sustain on such little sales, it will immediately force us to terminate positions and leave hardworking staff without jobs.

We have no funds remaining from the PPP, we cannot sustain on to-go food, and the reduction in capacity could possibly be what causes us to close our doors. Our front of the house staff make 90% of their income from tips and the capacity reduction greatly reduces the income they rely on. Not only would the front of the house staff see a reduction in income, we would need to terminate about 20% of our staff members, most of them who we have employed for years due to the decrease in sales.

We have been operating successfully and safely with strict policies of social distancing, mask wearing, and hand washing at 50% capacity. Our staff has been so diligent with enforcing these policies and we have been able to provide a safe environment. The restaurant sector has been hurt so badly please do not further our decline. You are jeopardizing the jobs of so many residents in Asheville without proof of transmission in our restaurants. I kindly ask that you continue to follow the Governors direction and guidelines and not impose further capacity reductions so we may continue to employ our hardworking staff and keep our doors open.

Merry Christmas Eve,
Sarah Coogan
co-owner of Pizza Mind, and WALK (both in West Asheville)