

210326 testimony TIO Bill – Carol McEntee

My name is Kevin Durfee and I am the owner of George's of Galilee.

The COVID pandemic has had a huge impact on my restaurant and all of the restaurants in Rhode Island. One of the ways we were able to survive the last year was expanding outdoor dining. This was particularly important for businesses that are more seasonal in nature, such as my own business. For many restaurants, this was made possible because municipalities relaxed their rules on permitting outdoor dining.

We were fortunate enough to have plenty of outdoor seating to handle the volume of business, mostly because our volume was much lower so we did not have to expand seating BUT many places that did not have outdoor seating were able to put together additional seating areas outside with the help of their municipality that otherwise would not be permitted. From what I have witnessed, this was critical to these places' survival and should continue indefinitely as long as public safety hasn't been impacted.

It is going to take years for our industry to recover. We all love going out to dinner. We share our best occasions and memorable experiences with family and friends at restaurants all over. We are all in this together. We need smart, innovative legislation like this to help our industry recover.

I want to thank Chairwoman McEntee for introducing this legislation.