

June 10, 2025

The Honorable Carol Hagan McEntee, Chair
House Small Business Committee
Rhode Island House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: BILL NUMBER H-6392 – AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- OUTDOOR DINING ACT

Chair McEntee and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I write to express our support for House Bill 6392 – Outdoor Dining Act, which would authorize food service establishments to provide temporary outdoor dining for up to 18 months when their primary indoor space is rendered uninhabitable due to a casualty such as fire or flood. This bill includes a sunset provision ending on June 30, 2027.

While this legislation was originally prompted by an unfortunate and disruptive incident affecting a long-standing restaurant, its provisions are applicable to all 39 cities and towns in Rhode Island. In any community, sudden events such as fires, floods, or other disasters can threaten not just businesses but also the livelihoods of those they employ.

A key priority of the League, on behalf of our member municipalities, is supporting policies that sustain local economies and promote workforce stability. H6392 directly supports these goals by helping businesses remain operational and retain staff during difficult and uncertain times. When restaurants are forced to close temporarily due to physical damage, workers often face immediate layoffs and loss of income. By allowing for temporary outdoor dining, this bill creates a pathway for employers to continue operations and keep their employees on payroll while repairs are underway.

The League also appreciates that H6392 strikes a thoughtful balance between flexibility for businesses and municipal oversight. Cities and towns would retain authority to ensure that outdoor operations comply with local ordinances related to safety, zoning, and quality of life. The legislation is narrowly tailored, time-limited, and respects the unique needs of each community.

We commend the sponsor and the committee for recognizing the value of proactive, commonsense policy that strengthens local resilience. The League supports H6392 as a meaningful tool to help municipalities and small businesses navigate recovery and protect jobs in the wake of unforeseen challenges.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and for your continued commitment to Rhode Island's cities and towns.

Sincerely,



Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Small Business Committee