

Dear Members of the Pawtucket General Assembly Delegation:

I am writing on behalf of the Administration and City Council members of the City of Pawtucket to express their concerns about 2021-H 6119 and S 0654, entitled, AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- SMALL BUSINESSES--ZONING ORDINANCES. These bills will impose a one year moratorium on enforcement of municipal ordinances or zoning requirements that penalize owners of food service establishments/bars for modifications/alternations to their premises in response to an emergency declaration.

While the city recognizes the hardship that small businesses have faced by the pandemic, and the brunt of the hardship suffered by service businesses like restaurants and bars, we do not believe that this bill is the proper way to assist these businesses. The city of Pawtucket and other cities and towns have been working closely with their small business communities to assist them during this difficult time, but doing so while protecting the health and welfare, as well as the peace and safety of those people living in the areas surrounding these establishments. Balancing the needs of the business community and the surrounding residents is the job of local government and we do it on a daily basis. This is true in good times, but even more so under the conditions we have all lived through this past year. The inability of the city to enforce municipal ordinances and zoning regulations could make it very difficult for cities to continue to do so, which will adversely affect businesses, as well as residents. This is especially so in cities, like Pawtucket, where many restaurants are located in or directly abutting residential areas.

Specifically, this bill is so broadly drafted, with so little definition, that it is impossible to determine what is a legitimate modification and what is a legitimate public safety concern. If cities and towns cannot enforce ordinances and zoning regulations, how are municipalities expected to address issues if they arise at a food establishment or in the surrounding neighborhood? To allow these non-conforming modifications to continue for a full-year after the emergency is no longer present seems arbitrary and unnecessary.

We understand how important working together in partnerships is for the quality of life of our city. The state, the city, the business community and the public all working together is necessary to make Pawtucket a better place in which to live and work. And when one of those partners is suffering, it is vital that we all come together to help make a difference in their situation. But to change the rules for one partner without considering the effects on the others, even with the best of intentions, is not the answer.

For these reasons, we are asking you not to support 2021-H 6119 and S 0654, entitled, AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- SMALL BUSINESSES--ZONING ORDINANCES. The House bill is scheduled for a hearing in the House Small Business Committee on Friday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, at 3:00 p.m. The Senate bill is not yet scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee

Thank you for your support on this matter.

**Richard Goldstein, MMC**

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