

**A RESOLUTION TO BE SUBMITTED BY
LEGISLATOR LORIGO**

Re: Calling on State Liquor Authority to Waive Liquor License Renewal Fees

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced social distancing requirements on residents and businesses to try and control the spread of the disease and limit the number of residents requiring intensive care at the same time; and

WHEREAS, this past year Executive Orders from Governor Cuomo have forced bars and restaurants across New York State to be shuttered entirely and, when open, to serve patrons at a reduced capacity and with fewer hours of operation; and

WHEREAS, the New York State Restaurant Association released a report in September showing survey results suggesting two-thirds of restaurants across New York State could close permanently without significant governmental assistance. At one point this past year, 80% of in New York's restaurant workforce was laid off or furloughed. Many of those jobs have not returned; and

WHEREAS, despite being hit particularly hard by the pandemic, and closed by the Governor's orders, bars and restaurants are still required to pay license renewal fees. These license fees are significant, with State Liquor Authority fees for on-premises liquor licenses in the City of Buffalo costing as much as \$3,000 for each renewal; and

WHEREAS, it is vital that government step up and assist the owners, entrepreneurs, and employees of the service industry during these unprecedented times. Continuing to charge restaurants and bars for the right to continue operating, at a time when factors outside their control have made that increasingly difficult, is oppressive; and

WHEREAS, this past year the State Liquor Authority has extended the deadline for businesses to pay liquor license renewal fees, which would have otherwise been due between March and November of 2020, through to the end of December 2020. However, businesses that made use of the extended deadline were still required to pay the full rate for their license renewal. The fines and fees for licenses expiring in 2020 should have been waived entirely considering it has been state mandates that have limited in-person dining and hours of operation; and

WHEREAS, while an extension has been granted to 2020 renewals, no relief from licensing costs has been promised or provided to restaurants and bars required to renew their licenses in 2021. There has been little forward looking direction provided by state officials to businesses regarding what the future will hold. While it is impossible to predict how the pandemic will continue to unfold, it is likely that the service industry will not see relief until a sizable percentage of the population is inoculated with COVID-19, either through vaccine distribution or natural spread; and

WHEREAS, in an attempt to aide local bars and restaurants who have struggled through 2020 and are required to renew their licenses in 2021, State Senator Tim Kennedy, backed by the New York State Restaurant Association, has called for the state to temporarily cut liquor license renewal fees in 2021; and

WHEREAS, local businesses need the state to take action before more are forced out of business. Erie County's restaurants and bars are in desperate need of assistance for both 2020 operations and their continued ability to operate in 2021.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that this honorable body hereby calls on the State Liquor Authority to waive license renewal fees on any liquor license that expired in 2020 and has not yet been renewed; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that this honorable body hereby further calls for the State Liquor Authority to provide a one-time credit to any establishment that has already paid their 2020 renewal fees for use on the next license renewal; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that this honorable body hereby joins Senator Tim Kennedy in calling for the New York State Liquor Authority to waive or reduce license renewal fees for licenses expiring in 2021; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that certified copies of this resolution be sent to the New York State Liquor Authority, Governor Andrew Cuomo, the Western New York Delegation to the New York State Senate and assembly, and any other party deemed necessary and proper.

Fiscal Impact: None for resolution.