

ASSEMBLY CONSUMER AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 170

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 19, 2020

The Assembly Consumer Affairs Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Resolution No. 170.

As amended and reported by the committee, this resolution urges all New Jersey residents to patronize small businesses to support them through the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are over 860,000 small businesses operating in New Jersey, which employ an estimated 1.8 million individuals in this State. These small businesses are the backbone of New Jersey's economy, providing services and employment to individuals throughout the State in such varied industries as finance, health care, the arts, real estate, food and restaurant, and retail, among many others. On January 31, 2020, the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services declared the outbreak of a novel coronavirus, abbreviated as COVID-19, as a public health emergency for the United States. COVID-19 is a contagious, and at times fatal, respiratory disease that can spread from person to person via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. On March 9, 2020, Governor Murphy declared a State of Emergency and a Public Health Emergency to address the COVID19 pandemic in this State.

On March 21, 2020, Governor Murphy announced Executive Order No. 107, which closed all non-essential retail businesses and directed all New Jersey residents to stay at home to mitigate the impact and spread of COVID-19. As a result of this Executive Order closing all non-essential retail businesses and directing all New Jersey residents to stay at home, small businesses throughout this State face enormous economic pressure.

According to a March 2020 survey conducted by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic 73 percent of businesses reported a significant loss of revenue and over half of these businesses anticipated temporary layoffs. The economic circumstances of businesses and individuals have continued to worsen during the COVID-19 pandemic, as New Jersey workers have filed more than 1.65 million applications for unemployment insurance since the pandemic began.

Over the course of the late spring and summer of 2020, Governor Murphy issued several executive orders, which lifted the stay-at-home

order on New Jersey residents and permitted various types of businesses to begin reopening, but with restrictions in place that have been costly and burdensome to implement. The restrictions have included an initial prohibition on indoor dining, capacity limits for indoor dining once it was permitted, indoor capacity limits for other types of businesses, social distancing requirements indoors and outdoors, and increased safety and sanitization protocols across every industry.

The months of closure and the difficulties businesses faced while reopening have led to continued revenue losses and many permanent closures Statewide, and most profoundly affected small businesses. Small businesses are locally owned and operated by our hardworking family members, our friends, and our neighbors, who need the patronage of all New Jersey residents to financially recover from the economic devastation brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The committee amendments update the resolution to reflect the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and its continued devastating effect on residents of the State and the small business community. Under the amendments, the resolution urges State residents to patronize small businesses to support them through the COVID-19 pandemic.