

# TEXAS HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

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Drew Darby

DISTRICT 72

COKE • CONCHO • GLASSCOCK • HOWARD • IRION • REAGAN • RUNNELS • STERLING • TOM GREEN

*Via email and hand-delivery*

September 23, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott  
Governor, State of Texas  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Abbott,

Thank you for your unwavering leadership amidst the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and the pivotal decisions you have made to protect thousands of Texans. I thank you for your September 17, 2020, executive order further expanding occupancy levels for restaurants, which will certainly benefit the hospitality and foodservice industry in West Texas at a time when businesses and employees in my district need relief now.

As Texas is making great strides in slowing the spread of COVID-19, I respectfully submit that you accommodate a regional approach to reopening bars, distilleries, and similar establishments that have less than 51% of their gross receipts from food sales, just as you have for others throughout our state. Although some bars have been able to reclassify themselves to meet the 51% threshold, many more establishments – particularly the small, family-owned businesses that make up the fabric of the Concho Valley – are unable to make this shift due to overwhelming costs and regulatory uncertainty. Many businesses in my district are struggling to survive and numerous bar owners have contacted me with concerns over the prospective loss of their entire livelihoods. Furthermore, several of my Chambers of Commerce are heavily invested in bars as part of our region's revitalization efforts and have a stake in the bar industry's success. Just last year, San Angelo was awarded the "Music Friendly Community" designation through your office, which has brought tremendous positive impact to the community. However, when our popular venues cannot accommodate live music, we cannot promote tourism and travel as an important economic development tool.

I am confident that the bars in rural communities like my district are wholeheartedly committed to enforcing crowd-control guidelines and following strict safety protocols as outlined by several associations representing these groups. Furthermore, I am confident in the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission's ability to support a staggered reopening plan. I think it is time to take careful, measured steps to phase-in Texas bars and similar establishments and help restore the jobs and revenue from the industry.

Again, thank you for your leadership and your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Drew Darby".

Drew Darby

cc: General Bentley Nettles, Executive Director, Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission