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Virginia's Restaurants Are Ready and Equipped to Serve Up Memorable and Safe Holiday Meals

Richmond, VA – As the holidays rapidly approach, Virginia's restaurants are prepared to serve up delicious and safe family meals.

The Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association (VRLTA) and restaurants across the Commonwealth understand that the COVID-19 virus is serious, but also want to assure diners that restaurants are taking safety seriously.

VRLTA President Eric Terry said "Restaurants observe rigorous cleaning requirements and are required to comply with the highly-regulated safety protocols included in the FDA Food Code. These establishments are now going even further to ensure the health and well-being of the public and staff by utilizing new sanitizing practices, following social distancing, wearing face masks, and following COVID-19 Safe Practices. The health of customers and staff has been, and always will be, a top priority for restaurants."

According to public health data, restaurant closures have had little to no proven effect on the spread of the virus. Most states' data—including Virginia's—points to uncontrollable, unregulated places such as family gatherings and private parties as the main culprit for the spread and most recent spikes. Weighing in on the issue, National Restaurant Association President Tom Bene reiterated the safety of restaurants, "To date, we have not found any systematic outbreaks of COVID-19 from the hundreds of thousands of restaurants around the country that operate within [our] guidance and follow local public health and safety regulation."

VRLTA remains concerned that elected officials will look for the easiest targets to control. COVID fatigue is a real thing, and the human need for contact is strong. Given a choice between taking precautions and having a human connection, many people will choose human contact, even knowing the risks. Because governments cannot control individuals or their risky behavior, restaurants may once again be a target for closure although there is little or no evidence that restaurants are the source of infection or spread.

Instead of being blamed for the problem, VRLTA believes that restaurants can be the solution to COVID fatigue-induced social gatherings. “Restaurants present a controlled business environment – using every known COVID Safe Practice – while offering the social connection people are craving,” continued Terry. “Here are two very real choices for your holiday dinner: a family gets together at the home of grandma without precautions, including taking off masks when everyone is together. Or, the same family chooses to dine out in a safe, controlled space and bring extra take-out dinners home to family members that are high risk with underlying conditions. We believe dining out is a safer choice.”

Local restaurants want to be a part of the solution for mitigation efforts to help keep the virus under control. VRLTA asks you to help promote the restaurants in your area as a safe alternative, where social gatherings are supervised and all of the COVID-19 Safe Practices are being observed. VRLTA encourages all Virginians to consider dining with your local restaurants to ensure a safe holiday experience for your family and to support our state’s economic recovery.

About the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association (VRLTA)

The Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association is the only unified voice for the restaurant, lodging, travel and hospitality suppliers associations. VRLTA creates value for members by promoting the legislative interests of the industry, networking, educational opportunities, and protecting free enterprise. Inquiries about membership and VRLTA services should be directed to VRLTA at (804) 288-3065 or VRLTA.org.

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