



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**For more information contact:**  
[Jeannie Vogel](#)  
517-204-6052

### **Gov. Whitmer, AG Nessel, State Officials Commend Bar and Restaurant Owners for Compliance with COVID-19 Emergency Health Orders**

LANSING, MICH. Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Attorney General Dana Nessel and other state officials today issued statements highly commending bar and restaurant owners for their ongoing compliance with the state's emergency health orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, licensed establishments are strictly prohibited from allowing in-person dining and gatherings, as defined by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Gatherings and Face Mask Order.

"Our bar and restaurant owners have made incredible sacrifices over the past 10 months to keep their communities safe and slow the spread of COVID-19. I want to thank those who have enacted strict safety protocols and worked around the clock to save lives," said Governor Whitmer. "My administration has been working hard to secure crucial support for these businesses. I was proud to, among other things, negotiate with the legislature to sign a bipartisan supplemental budget that provides support for small business owners like these. I will keep working around the clock on their behalf. Remember, Michiganders, mask up, maintain six feet of social distancing, and avoid indoor gatherings where COVID-19 can spread easily. We will get through this together."

Whitmer's financial relief efforts for bar and restaurant owners began last April when she authorized a spirits buyback program for on-premises liquor licensees whose businesses were affected by the health crisis. More than \$3.3 million in financial relief went to 670 bar and restaurant owners across the state – a financial lifeline averaging \$5,000 for hard-hit hospitality businesses. She recently announced a second liquor buyback that is in the works. In June, the governor signed legislation allowing bars and restaurants to sell cocktails and alcoholic drinks to-go for the first time in Michigan and expanded bars' seating capacity in outdoor social districts. In July, Whitmer increased the discount on spirits purchased by on-premises licensees from the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) from 17 percent to 23 percent for 12 months.

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel also praised the state's bar and restaurant owners.

"I applaud every business owner in Michigan who has stepped up, braced themselves for the storm, and complied with Michigan's public health emergency orders," said Nessel. "This pandemic has brought them to their knees, but the vast majority of them have worked hard to stay open during the worst of times. Their creativity, innovation and sheer fortitude have set the gold standard for the rest of us."

Nessel's office is working closely with the MLCC as it exercises its enforcement duties to ensure the state upholds its responsibility to protect the lives of its residents. The MLCC, housed in the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), issues and renews more than 19,000 liquor licenses – of which approximately 8,500 are for on-premises establishments: bars and restaurants.

"We must certainly recognize these business owners for their compliance with emergency health orders during this unprecedented time," said LARA Director Orlene Hawks. "They have made great sacrifices limiting their business operations and for that, we are all grateful. By adhering to these temporary health safety measures, 2021 will be a great comeback year for these businesses who are the backbone of our economy."

The MLCC Chair Pat Gagliardi noted that the vast majority of liquor licensees are compliant with emergency public health orders and have taken the high road, setting high standards for the industry.

"The MLCC thanks and appreciates the thousands of liquor licensees who are following the emergency orders and are keeping us safe," said Gagliardi. "I am extremely proud of these business owners who have set an exemplary example during these tough times. These licensees know that having a liquor license is a privilege that comes with responsibilities; namely, protecting consumers and the general public."

Of the approximately 8,500 on-premises liquor licensees in the state, the MLCC has suspended the liquor licenses of a total of 32 establishments for violations due to the COVID-19 pandemic since last September. The licensees' multiple violations of the current MDHHS order include allowing non-residential, in-person gatherings; providing in-person dining; failure to require face coverings for staff and patrons; and failure to prohibit patrons from congregating. During "normal times" the use of Emergency Suspensions by the MLCC is generally infrequent. Over the last seven years – not including the recent Emergency Suspension Orders – there have been approximately 15 such notated suspensions, due to various causes.

The MLCC's priority is to enforce emergency orders, knowing that these orders are targeted and temporary. The MLCC Enforcement Division is working diligently to ensure that licensees are compliant with the MDHHS orders. It investigates all complaints relative to allegations of violations of the Code, Rules and Executive and Emergency Orders, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic. Any licensed establishment that is in violation of the MDHHS emergency order will be held strictly accountable and risk suspension or revocation of its license.

To date, there have been more than 519,082 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Michigan, resulting in more than 13,354 deaths.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus) and [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/Coronavirus).

*It is the mission of the MLCC to make alcoholic beverages available for consumption while protecting the consumer and the general public through the regulation of those involved in the importation, sale, consumption, distribution, and delivery of these alcohol products.*

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