



August 12, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor
State of California
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of Airlines for America (A4A), the principal trade and service organization of the U.S. airline industry, Airports Council International – North America (ACI-NA), the principal trade association representing the local, regional, and state governing bodies that own and operate airports in the United States and Canada, and the Airport Restaurant and Retail Association (ARRA), the voice of restaurateurs and retailers who operate concessions at airports across the U.S., including small minority and women-owned companies, we are writing in hopes of resolving what appears to be an unintended consequence of some recent state orders regarding restrictions on indoor dining in bars, clubs, lounges and restaurants in counties with high COVID-19 infection rates. Specifically, these unintended consequences surround the requirement that food can be served only via take-away service, which is presenting unique challenges to the operations at commercial service airports in California.

As air travel is an essential service, airports and airlines have continued to operate throughout the pandemic, despite passenger counts that have dropped drastically. Airports have concession operations that provide food, beverage and seating for passengers, and airports and airlines operate lounges that serve both food and beverage. Both concessions and lounges have benefits for passengers beyond just food and beverage service, such as seating, Wi-Fi access, rest rooms and other services necessary during travel. Safety is our number one priority, and our industry strives to safely accommodate our passengers and employees through the airport and on our aircraft.

To that end airports and airlines have implemented extensive measures throughout the travel journey to help protect the traveling public during this global health crisis. The airline industry has developed a “Fly Healthy. Fly Smart.” campaign to amplify these efforts, which include face covering requirements, health acknowledgements and enhanced cleaning procedures. As part of this commitment, airports and airlines with lounges have moved to pre-packaged, self-serve food and beverage offerings to reduce touch points.

However, recent state directives ordering certain bars, clubs, lounges, and restaurants to close and/or eliminate indoor dining are being interpreted by some county health departments to include airport concessions and airline lounge service. Airlines, airports and concessionaires in some locations are being informed that while they can offer food, it cannot be consumed within the concession or lounge space and all seating must be removed from the restaurants and lounges.

This leaves passengers with only one place to find seating to consume food and beverage – in the airport holding area. When airports and airlines designed their post-security spaces, they factored all seating, not just holding area seating, into the equation to ensure seating and space for all passengers. Eliminating entire areas of available seating forces more people into less space to find a seat, which runs counter to current CDC and state health department guidelines on physical distancing.

We believe airports and airlines should utilize all available space within the airport environment to enable safer travel and social distancing. We respectfully request that you clarify these state orders relative to indoor food service on airport property as soon as possible in order to enable airlines and airports to serve food that can be consumed on-site in restaurants and lounges, provided reasonable efforts are made to maximize physical distancing, cleaning and customer and employee safety.

In this challenging time, we need the flexibility to be able to use all our available space behind security to enhance distancing between passengers in the airport environment. Please let us know if you have any questions about this request.

Sincerely,



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