



Dear Governor Lujan-Grisham,

The New Mexico Wine & Grape Growers Association respectfully asks that you reopen the wine industry in advance of the Special Legislative Session this week. Our state's wineries, vineyards and tasting rooms have waited patiently for the administration to acknowledge the importance of our industry and our impact on agriculture, tourism and the economy. For more than three weeks we were led to believe that wineries would open along with restaurants. A week ago, we had assurances that we would be opening with breweries. Clearly, we have failed to communicate the importance of reopening our wineries and our ability to do so safely. We take responsibility for whatever efforts we failed to present, and we want to provide you with every assurance that the New Mexico wine industry has made every necessary step to safely welcome customers back this weekend.

Due to the surprising and disappointing news that we were to remain closed, our entire board and membership has mobilized this weekend to pull together the enclosed Operational Guidelines for Wineries and Tasting Rooms, which includes employee and customer signage and a checklist that owners, managers and staff can refer to daily to ensure compliance with safe-serve and essential cleaning practices. We have held conference calls, zoom calls, best practices workshops and we worked collectively and cooperatively to agree upon the best practices and guidelines enclosed in these documents.

By undergoing this exhaustive process with our relatively small membership of 45 wineries, we have learned the value of carefully crafting our Covid-safe practices. We acknowledge that it has educated our owners and managers and helped individual wineries tightly focus their individual reopening strategies. It has brought us together to define how our industry can evolve and adapt to a changing world and retail environment. It has exposed our oversights and changed opinions based on constructive dialogue among our members. We had no idea how valuable this process would be.

Additionally, this has allowed us the opportunity to calm the growing voice of dissent from many members who may have considered premature reopening, which could have created a domino effect across the industry. However, asking for the continued patience of winemakers grows increasingly difficult as no clear path forward has been given by the state. We sincerely hope that the enclosed pathway to reopening documents are the solution that will meet your requirements.

The wine industry in New Mexico has demonstrated years of excellence in safety and health practices and our members have state-of-the-art sanitation equipment and chemicals to wash glasses and serving implements for our customers safety and enjoyment. We are on par with the excellence demonstrated by the Restaurant Association members and we are committed to the same level of performance expectations they have set for returning customers.

We have attached a list of procedural ideas to show you how we are already organizing to assist in this plan.

Our hope is that we can receive a decision from your office before the Special Legislative Session, so that we can provide a clear and reliable path forward and bring an end to the collective frustrations of a willingly compliant industry. I look forward to scheduling a phone call with you or your staff so that we can begin this process immediately.

Respectfully,

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