

The National Independent Venue Association applauds Senator Todd Young (R-IN) and Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) for introducing the RESTART Act to support the small- and mid-sized businesses most affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

Music venues were among the first to close when the pandemic spread across America, and will be among the very last to reopen. As states begin to reopen, most live events are in the last stage of reopening – often not until a vaccine is available. Even once venues are permitted by the government to reopen, the industry will require months to return to usual schedules, due to the intricate and complicated process of artists’ planning, scheduling and tour routing. We face a long road until reopening is possible, and in the meantime, we face upwards of 90 percent revenue loss.

Without government aid, thousands of independent venues will not survive to see the day when our doors can open to the public again. A survey of members of the National Independent Venue Association indicates that without further financial assistance, 90 percent of independent venues will permanently close within a few months.

The RESTART Act (S. 3814) will go a long way toward enabling the survival of shuttered small businesses like ours that are operating with zero revenue, high overhead, and an uncertain timeframe for reopening. It does so by:

- Providing long-term relief to industries like ours by financing the equivalent of six months’ worth of payroll, benefits, and fixed operating costs. In addition, it allows for flexible use of loan proceeds and loan forgiveness with no minimums on the percentage dedicated to any one expense. The ability to use funds on rent, mortgage payments, utilities and other fixed costs as needed is vital for businesses like ours to weather the current economic crisis.
- Ensuring independent venues are able to access loans by expanding eligibility to include small businesses with many part-time employees.
- Allowing up to 90 percent of the loan to be forgiven for businesses with and high revenue loss less than 500 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees.
- Recognizing recovery may be slow for some industries and providing a seven-year payback schedule, wherein principal payments are not required for two years and interest payments aren’t due for the first 12 months. This is crucial to fully shuttered industries that have no clear timeline for reopening.

This pandemic spread across the nation and has ravaged all sectors of the economy, including our small businesses that we have worked so hard to build. The sooner a vaccine is available, the sooner we will be able to reopen. We know how eager fans are to come back through our doors and we know our representatives in Congress are among them. The RESTART program may not sustain us until that day comes – we hope it does – but we trust that Congress will work with us and fight alongside us to ensure we make it to reopen.