

I testified before the Westchester County Board of Health today (Dec. 17, 2009) 9am. Here is my statement.

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Statement submitted to the Westchester County Board of Health at the public hearing on December 17, 2009 regarding additional fees.

Members of the Board,

Restaurants are struggling to keep their door open, many are not paying rent and some may not survive. We are doing our best to cope with the worst economic crisis since depression. Seventy percent of food establishments are owned and operated by individuals and families. They are forced to work longer hours, some seven days, pick up supplies themselves from the market and pay for it with credit cards charging 30% interest. We are financially strapped. The banks have cut our credit lines. We are unable to borrow on any terms.

Small businesses create seventy percent of the jobs. Nearly half of all adults worked in the restaurant industry at some point in their lives and one in four got their first job in a restaurant. Eating and drinking places are extremely labor intensive. It is vital to keep them open so more people can find work. Many of our fellow citizens are desperately looking for work. We need government help so we can employ more people. Raising taxes and fees will only eliminate jobs, reduce revenue and increase poverty.

Westchester County Health Department provides outstanding service to the food establishments. There is no question that you can do better with additional resources. But just like we are forced to operate our restaurants with less, much less, you can do it too. Times are tough. When the good times return you will have sound reasons to raise fees.

This is the wrong time to impose additional financial burden on us. Please, don't do it.