Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association and Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Establish Statewide Partnership; MRLA and MDARD to coordinate food labeling training for restaurants, prepare for retail sale

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The Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association (MRLA) and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) have announced a partnership that will enable restaurants to sell food and pantry items, which currently, can be sold only by grocery and retail stores.

Michigan's restaurant industry, which already is trained in food safety and sanitation, only needed guidance on how to label food to conduct retail sales. Through this new partnership, restaurants can receive training on proper labeling so they can sell food and pantry items directly to consumers, which not only offers more options to Michigan consumers, but also keeps the supply chain moving in more directions.

"Michigan's food and agriculture industry continues to demonstrate why it is considered one of the most diverse, innovative, and nimble in the nation," said Governor Gretchen Whitmer. "This partnership is yet another example of how our businesses and our state agencies have worked together to solve problems quickly, not only for the industry, but also for Michigan consumers."

"These partnerships—these solutions—don't happen by luck or by accident," said MDARD Director Gary McDowell. "A state agency like MDARD is able to partner with private industry and an association like MRLA and make change quickly because of the relationships that have been built over decades. When Michigan distilleries say they can change their operations to make much-needed hand sanitizer, MDARD paves the regulatory road and gets out of the way. And when restaurants tell us they have excess food coming in that could be sold directly to consumers, we work with MRLA to help get that done."

"Michigan restaurants are facing the COVID-19 crisis head-on and ensuring Michiganders h access to safe food. Grocery stores are overwhelmed with unprecedented demand. The fo supply chain for the restaurant industry is, vetted, reliable and a great resource to supplement traditional grocery stores," said Justin Winslow, MRLA President and CEO. "Having restaurants

sell typical grocery items will help support the extremely taxed grocery stores and provide customers with access to the essential food supplies they need during the Stay Home, Stay Safe Executive Order issued by Governor Whitmer."

The MRLA has provided the guidance documents on its website for all industry members seeking to provide support to the grocery stores. For access to the documents, visit **www.mrla.org/coronavirus.html**. Foodservice operations can find free ServSafe food safety training specific to take-out and delivery services that provides specific resources for keeping food safe amidst the Coronavirus outbreak.

About the Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association

(MRLA) is the recognized leader of Michigan's hospitality industry, providing essential services to the foodservice and lodging community. Founded in 1921 as the Michigan Restaurant Association and now known as the MRLA, the Association represents over 5,000 Michigan foodservice and lodging establishments. The industry plays an integral role in Michigan's economy, employing more than 595,000 people and creating nearly $40 billion in annual sales. For more information, visit ***www.mrla.org*** *and* ***www.detroitrla.org****.*

About the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) is comprised of six divisions that use a customer-driven, solution-oriented approach to cultivate and expand new economic opportunities for the food and agricultural sector; safeguard the public's food supply; inspect and enforce sound animal health practices; control and eradicate plant pests and diseases threatening the $104.7 billion food and agriculture system; preserve the environment by which the farming community makes their living and feeds consumers; and protect consumers by enforcing laws relating to weights and measures. For more information, visit ***https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/****.*

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at **Michigan.gov/Coronavirus** and **CDC.gov/Coronavirus**.

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