

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 1276

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH

Hearing Date: March 24, 2021 8:00 AM

Neil Russell, Senior Vice President of Corporate Affairs

Sysco

Houston, TX

Dear Chair Klick,

I am writing the Texas House Public Health Committee today in support of HB 1276 by Representative Tan Parker.

Sysco is the world's largest foodservice distributor. Our corporate headquarters are located in Houston and we have 18 Sysco locations throughout the State of Texas. In Texas alone, we employ 5,500 Sysco associates that serve over 30,000 Texas customers every day. The majority of these customers are restaurants, but we also supply food to hospitals, schools, military bases, churches, and other establishments that serve food away from home.

As you know, the foodservice industry was one of the hardest hit sectors in our economy last year. In fact, Technomic (a foodservice industry statistics firm) estimates that restaurants will not fully recover until 2023. And the full-service restaurant sector will not recover until 2025. Since the early days of the pandemic, Sysco has done everything imaginable to help our customers survive this unprecedented time.

One key item that helped our customers leave their doors open was the bulk items directive that Governor Abbott issued in March 2020. In the months that followed, Sysco helped our customers stand up over 3,000 of these "groceraunts" in Texas.

We were also able to take this language from the Governor and the Texas Department of State Health Services and advocate for similar bulk items waivers in around 40 other states. As a result, Sysco helped our customers set up over 12,000 "groceraunts" across the nation.

This concept tremendously helped both our customers and their communities get through the hardest times and is still helping them today for those that have stuck with it. Our customers with "groceraunts" or these "pop up" markets sold everything from toilet paper and cleaning products to grocery items such as eggs, bread, and proteins. Other customers saw great success with creating pre-packaged "meals-to-go" and desire to continue providing this service in the future.

Although better days are on the horizon, the industry will not fully return to its' pre-pandemic operating environment overnight. This bill will provide our customers with another outlet and line of business to operate and thrive in in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Neil Russell

Senior Vice President of Corporate Affairs

Sysco Corporation

Cc: Vice Chair Guerra
Representative Allison
Representative Campos
Representative Coleman
Representative Collier

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Representative Jetton
Representative Oliverson
Representative Price
Representative Smith
Representative Zwiener