



June 17, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Leader Jeffries, Leader Thune, and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the National Restaurant Association, we write to urge Congress to delay the impending federal ban on hemp-derived THC beverages and use that time to develop a durable regulatory framework that ensures consumer safety while meeting growing market demand.

The Association supports a regulated market for hemp-derived THC beverages for consumption at restaurants—one built on clear federal standards covering age verification, production and quality assurances, marketing and labeling requirements, dosing disclosures, and operationalizable impairment standards. A federal framework that sets baseline standards while empowering state and local governments to tailor market-specific rules – similar to that of alcoholic beverages – would create a safe foundation.

The restaurant industry’s highest priority is the safety of our customers, and our workforce is well-positioned to serve these products responsibly. Operators selling alcohol beverages have established training and impairment management practices that could be adapted for serving hemp-derived THC beverages.

Consumer interest in hemp-derived THC beverages is real and growing. The 2018 Farm Bill’s definition of hemp enabled the creation of a low-dose hemp-derived THC beverage market that has since become a meaningful segment of beverage consumption at restaurants. According to Association research, 5% of restaurants that serve alcohol

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currently offer these beverages, and 26% of all restaurants are interested in offering them under a clear regulatory framework—representing a potential market of \$1.6 billion annually. For many operators, particularly high-volume beverage venues, these products serve as alcohol alternatives for guests wanting to participate in social settings. For consumers whose lifestyles are diverging from traditional beverage alcohol preferences, restaurants want the ability to meet that demand in a safe and regulated market.

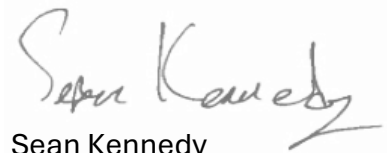
Restaurants operate on razor-thin margins. In 2024, the median fullservice restaurant's pre-tax margin fell to 2.8%, down from 4% in 2019, and last year 42% of operators reported no profit at all. For operators already offering hemp-derived THC beverages, the revenue loss from a federal ban could be the difference between profit and loss. A two-year delay would provide the predictability operators need, particularly multi-unit and franchised brands navigating varied state approaches, while the existing state-regulated market for low-dose products continues and Congress develops a national framework.

Consumers have made it clear—they want to enjoy hemp-derived THC beverages. The only question is whether Washington will create a way they can enjoy them safely or if they will allow a thriving market supporting small business owners to disappear because they wouldn't create a sensible regulatory framework.

Time is short—the existing market will shut down in November due to legislation enacted last year. The National Restaurant Association urges Congress to act now: delay implementation and commit to a deliberate, safety-focused regulatory process this emerging market deserves. We are ready to work with you to get it right.

The National Restaurant Association appreciates the opportunity to engage on this issue and looks forward to working with Congress as discussions progress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean Kennedy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sean Kennedy
Chief Advocacy Officer