

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Governor Shuttters Socorro County Restaurants Days before Valentine's Day Weekend

Senator Joshua Sanchez, Representative Gail Armstrong Respond

SANTA FE – On Wednesday, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and the New Mexico Department of Health updated their statewide COVID-19 “Red to Green” map. The Governor and health officials were quick to highlight that several counties moved from red to yellow. They said little, however, about the fact that at least one county – Socorro County – was downgraded from yellow to red just days before Valentine's Day.

“While the Governor dines at the White House in Washington, D.C. today, Socorro County residents and restaurants are facing another shutdown,” said Senator Joshua Sanchez (District 30-Cibola, Socorro, McKinley, and Valencia). “How does the Governor expect these businesses to survive with such uncertainty from week to week? It is time to rethink the ‘Red to Green Framework’ and take the necessary steps to reopen our state.”

Under the Governor's existing framework, restaurants in a “red” county cannot offer indoor dining and can only operate at 25% of their outdoor dining capacity. The recent downgrade in Socorro County is proving to be particularly harsh for local restaurants that anticipated and planned for the holiday weekend.

“Restaurants have patiently waited to reopen, completed the steps to be COVID-safe, invested in inventory and bringing back staff, in a framework that has no long-term in-person guidelines,” added Representative Gail Armstrong (District 49-Catron, Socorro, and Valencia). “As we start to come out of the pandemic, our restaurants will face increased strain as they are forced to reevaluate staffing levels and inventory to comply with a reentry system that is already inefficient and cumbersome. Giving a business 48 hours to comply in a system that is ever-changing just makes it harder on our entire community.”

Earlier this week, Senator Sanchez introduced legislation (Senate Bill 364) to allow businesses to operate at a minimum of 50% of their occupancy limit during a public health order. According to a recent *New York Times* [article](#), New Mexico and Oregon remain the only two “mostly closed” states for business in the entire country.

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