

HAND AND STONE MASSAGE – GAITHERSBURG

August 3, 2020

To the members of the County Council and County Executive Elrich,

I am writing to you today on behalf of FGG Spa, LLC, a franchisee of Hand & Stone. We own and operate a location in The Kentlands in Gaithersburg that has been closed since mid March. Though we certainly understand the need for caution and public safety as a priority, the decision to keep our doors shuttered while other businesses have been allowed to open has had a detrimental effect on our business, our team, and our clients.

We have a staff of 25 in our Gaithersburg location, including management, Massage Therapists, Estheticians, and sales staff who have not been able to work since we closed in March. We hear from them on a regular basis how the closure is impacting their ability to provide for their families. We hear their struggles of being so far behind in their bills that they don't know how they will catch up. Many are facing a difficult decision that they will need to leave the industry entirely and find work elsewhere because they cannot sustain their lives without a regular paycheck anymore. Our service providers spent thousands of dollars on their professional licenses, and have such a passion for their clients and what they do, that it's heartbreaking for them to even think about having to make a choice between the career they are passionate about and getting a paycheck.

We have over 800 members at the Gaithersburg location who come in monthly for Massage and Facial services. We have been fielding their calls and emails for months and listening to their frustration. Massage and Facials are more than a luxury to relax – our clients come to us seeking therapeutic treatment, pain relief, and yes stress relief, which is so important given the state of things right now. Our spa is a destination for them, and many simply do not understand why our doors are closed, while the other businesses, restaurants, shops, in The Kentlands and around Montgomery County are open.

We care very deeply about the safety and health of our clients and our team. We know for a fact that we can return to business, let our teams return to work, and do so safely. We have robust protocol already in place in our locations across the country that have been open for months that take into consideration limiting the number of people in the spa at one time, PPE for our teams, enhanced sanitation protocols...Hand & Stone nationally has almost 450 locations. Since reopening, the company has done almost half a million services. Out of those, the company has received 3 alerts from clients testing positive for COVID. Of those 3, through contact tracing, not a single case has been traced back to Hand & Stone. We can operate our business and still provide our client the level of service that they have come to expect from our business while keeping safety.

I humbly and respectfully ask that you allow us to return to work.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jake Culpepper-Perdue
Vice President of Operation
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