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Westend Cafe Fights For The Livelihood Of It's Employees

Costa Mesa, CA (January 14th, 2021) - Roland Barrera and Tyler Barber, co-owners of Costa Mesa-based restaurant Westend Cafe, continue the fight to keep their business open and their staff employed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Westend employs a staff of 20 total and 5 of them already became homeless under the first emergency lockdown order. Barrera/Barber, like many restaurant owners, aren't sure what will happen tomorrow. Their greatest concern is the responsibility to keep food on the table for their staff and families. Barrera said, "This is what keeps me up at night. If I don't fight for my employees, who will?"

As new local and state restrictions are updated, Westend has always been largely compliant with COVID-19 safety protocol. Mandatory temperature checks, consistent hand washing, and mask wearing. "Security and back of house staff always wear masks. We are supportive of social distancing but it's very difficult to consistently police our customers. We recommend safety measures but it's not our right to force them to do something they don't want to do. I'm just so grateful they are supporting us during this very difficult time." says Barrera.

After four of his employees became homeless due to COVID-19 stay-at-home-orders, the co-owners felt responsible. We promised we would fight for them to keep their jobs and eventually one day, get them their own place again. "It breaks my heart to see them work so hard and then struggle at night to find another couch to sleep on," continued Barrera. "I have a feeling so many businesses feel the same way I do."

Westend Cafe has been recently charged with illegally operating during the COVID-19 pandemic. Forty percent of their business is created from 5pm-9:30pm and sixty percent is created from 9:30 p.m. to close. Westend's age demographic is 26-40, which has seen the highest increase in suicide since COVID-19 started. Barrera added, "I felt compelled to offer a late night food menu to a community that is struggling mentally like the rest of the country. I kept our outdoor dining service open past 10pm and many customers have thanked us for this nighttime "escape." That's where our business excelled and I could continue to keep all my our employees on payroll, more hours and give them the opportunity to make about sixty percent more in tips," Barrera added.

Before the case against Westend, the Orange County DA's office said it has declined to file charges in nearly two dozen cases against business owners accused of illegal operations during the pandemic. Barrera feels like he is being targeted. "Dozens of California businesses are not following the stricter policies as well as Governor Newsom not adhering to his own", he stated.

Said Barrera, "We're just trying to keep our our business open, give our staff a paycheck so they can take care of their families and do our best to follow local and state regulations. We have 30 children counting on our employees to feed them. It is their cause that I am fighting for."

Westend has retained Orange County-based attorney Julie Swain. The employees have also established a Westend Go Fund Me page to help pay for legal fees and to support employees' families.