ThePlateFund Raises $7.1 Million to Provide 14,200 King County Restaurant Workers with Immediate, One-Time $500 Payments

To date: 10,700 total applications approved, $5.35 million paid directly to affected workers

Two-thirds of recipients live in zip codes classified as economically distressed by the King County government

SEATTLE – #ThePlateFund, an initiative to provide emergency financial assistance to King County restaurant and food-service workers who have lost jobs and income due to business disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, announced today that it has raised $7.1 million to provide at least 14,200 King County restaurant workers with immediate one-time $500 payments.

The fund, created by the Schultz Family Foundation in partnership with #allinseattle, Seattle Foundation and UpTogether, began with the goal of urgently serving as many in-need restaurant workers as possible in King County. To date: #ThePlateFund has raised $4.1 million from 2,500+ donors in addition to $3 million provided by the Schultz Family Foundation. Thus far, 10,700 applications have been successfully processed and $5.35 million has been paid directly to affected workers.

Two-thirds of recipients live in zip codes classified as economically distressed by the King County government. To ensure that assistance continues to get to the most vulnerable and hardest hit communities, #ThePlateFund has formed partnerships with El Centro de la Raza, Falis Community Service and Asian Counseling and Referral Service. Each organization is helping direct payments to affected workers within their respective networks, including those who may be undocumented or unbanked, and may not be eligible for government assistance. As of today, all relief assistance is being made available exclusively through #ThePlateFund’s community partners or using codes that applicants receive from their employers or former employers. Restaurant owners may request codes to help workers in the greatest need by emailing coderequests@theplatefund.com.

Members of the community are encouraged to help the fund reach more workers by donating at www.theplatefund.com. Donations are tax deductible, and one hundred percent of all contributions will go directly to workers.

When COVID-19 hit the Seattle area, more than 100,000 people were employed at some 5,000 food establishments in King County. Most restaurants have been forced to close or reduce operations, laying off some or all of their employees.

A vast majority of line cooks, wait staff, dishwashers, bartenders and other restaurant and food-service industry employees rely on every paycheck, as well as tips, to support themselves and their families. Many have already depleted their savings and find themselves without money as they wait for federal stimulus payments and unemployment insurance benefits. The fund is also intended to assist restaurant workers who do not qualify for unemployment insurance or the federal stimulus payment because of immigration status or other issues.

While most restaurant owners are doing everything they can to help their people through the crisis, the situation is especially challenging for single-location establishments and smaller businesses.
The need is enormous. While the fund will not be able to assist all workers who have been affected by this crisis, it is continuing to raise money to broaden its reach as the crisis continues. The fund is designed to provide emergency bridge payments to cash-strapped restaurant workers until they are able to receive unemployment insurance and/or federal stimulus payments, if they are eligible. The fund is also intended to serve as a complement to other community-led COVID-19 relief initiatives in King County.

The application process and electronic payments for #ThePlateFund are being administered by UpTogether, a digital capital exchange platform created by the Family Independence Initiative and made available through the #GiveTogetherNow campaign.

#ThePlateFund is grateful to the grassroots network of restaurant owners, partner organizations and individuals who so generously donated money, time and talent to make this initiative possible so quickly. Specifically, we wish to thank Seattle Foundation; El Centro de la Raza; Falis Community Service; Asian Counseling and Referral Service; Charlie’s Produce; Charlie and Courtin Billow; The Bezos Family; Ellison Foundation; The Prado Group; Patty and Steve Fleischmann; Ray and Marilee Bowen; Paul G. Allen Family Foundation; Carroll Family Fund; Google.org; Valor Equity Partners; Ste. Michelle Wine Estates; Lucy Helm; John Meisenbach; Jeff and Judy Greenstein; Michael and Iris Smith; The Ritt Family; Carol Bobo; Bruce and Jeannie Nordstrom; Neupert Family Foundation; Sid Lee (formerly Hornall Anderson); UpTogether by Family Independence Initiative; #allinseattle; Amperity; Seattle Restaurants United; Washington Hospitality Association; Seattle Restaurant Alliance; The Starbucks Foundation; and hundreds of restaurants from the Greater Seattle area. A list of supporters and partners is available at www.theplatefund.com.

Quotes from #ThePlateFund recipients:

- “I just wanted to give my heartfelt thanks. I was brought to tears when I received the aid you provided. I am so, so very grateful, and I appreciate this effort being made to the people that are often forgotten in times like these.” – Mariel

- “I first would like to sincerely thank you for the compassion you have for us service workers and for setting up help for us to not get so far behind on our bills and life expenses at this time! It helped me towards my rent.” – Angela

- “This is so very generous and helps me stay on top of my bills from April since I’m still awaiting my unemployment benefits. Thank you for all you're doing to help others like myself.” – Joelle

- “This is like a Godsend.” – Trina

- “Unemployment is a quarter of what I was making. It’s nothing. So The Plate Fund has helped me. Because we were ahead of the curve, I was able to pay March’s rent.” – Omitosin

- “Thank you so much for giving myself and my family this much-needed help.” – Everett

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