

**Office of the County Auditor**  
**Auditor's Analysis**

**Council Bill No. 58-2021**

Introduced: July 21, 2021

Auditor: Owen Clark

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Fiscal Impact:

The fiscal impact of this legislation cannot be determined because the revenues derived from the additional outdoor seating at the restaurants that have and will receive this temporary permit cannot be estimated.

Per the Director of the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits (DILP), a more formal County practice for outdoor dining approval was already in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, that approval is subject to the full Building Code requirements of Howard County Code Title 3 and Planning and Zoning requirements of Howard County Code Title 16. This “temporary process” recognized that COVID-19 placed limitations that would not necessarily require full design requirements (e.g., parking demands).

Purpose:

The purpose of this legislation is to extend the expiration of temporary outdoor restaurant seating permits until November 15, 2021.

Per information provided by the Director of DILP, 64 applications were submitted to date and 34 entities currently hold a permit.

Without this extension, the existing permit program would expire on August 15, 2021, in conjunction with the expiration of the state’s emergency order.

Other Comments:

The Director of the DILP stated that:

- The DILP began administering this temporary permit program in June 2020 at no cost to the applicant using an online application portal ([www.MyHoward.info](http://www.MyHoward.info)).
- This temporary permit program operates with DILP, the Department of Planning and Zoning, and the Howard County Health Department as primary review and approval agencies, with the Department of Fire and Rescue Services’ Fire Marshal’s Office assisting with field oversight.
- A process is being contemplated to allow some restaurants to make their outdoor seating permanent, which includes a simplified application process for restaurants under a certain threshold and an expedited initial review process for those restaurants adding a more significant number of seats.