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MICAH Z. KELLNER
65th Assembly District

January 22, 2010

Tim and Nina Zagat
Co- Founders and Co-Chairs
The Zagat Survey
4 Columbus Circle
New York, NY 10019

Dear Mr. and Ms. Zagat:

With New York City Restaurant Week just around the corner, I am writing to you, as I did in 2008, to ask your company to incorporate features in the Zagat Survey of great importance to residents of New York and visitors to New York who have disabilities. I did not receive a reply to my letter in 2008, nor did I receive a call back after leaving quite a few messages and I am hoping that this year you may find the time to entertain this request.

Like many New Yorkers who enjoy taking advantage of the city's vast and wonderful array of restaurants, I am a regular user of the Zagat Survey. Of course it's not just New York and it's not just restaurants—Zagat users can find reviews of hotels, nightlife, and attractions in cities across the United States and around the world. They can search for restaurants with “outdoor seating,” “dramatic interiors,” “teen appeal,” or “gracious hosts”—they can find hotels with private butlers, adjoining rooms, or child safety features; and they can tell at glance how long a museum has been in business and whether it accepts credit cards.

What your customers cannot learn from the Zagat Survey, unfortunately, is whether an establishment is accessible for customers with disabilities. For a wheelchair user, someone who relies on a hearing aid, or someone of low vision or who is blind, this can be a critical omission. Imagine planning your evening around a trip to that great restaurant you found on the Zagat website, only to arrive and find it off-limits, behind a narrow door, down an inaccessible stairway, or without the proper bathroom accommodations.

While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has greatly enhanced the number of accessible public establishments, many businesses remain inaccessible to millions of Americans with disabilities. By including accessibility as a feature in its reviews of restaurants, the Zagat Survey would be expanding its product to an untapped group of consumers. Zagat Surveyors could easily do a tremendous service—by determining whether establishments under review meet ADA guidelines with regard to restaurant entrances, floor plans and proper bathroom accommodations. They could also note when establishments have high levels of ambient noise, if there are induction loops installed for those using hearing aids, or when Braille or other interpretive services exist for persons of low vision or who are blind.

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If an establishment is found to meet ADA guidelines it could be noted in the print edition with universally-understood accessibility icons and could be included on the Zagat's website as an online search criterion.

The Zagat Survey is in my estimation the most influential restaurant guide in the world, and by taking these steps to include accessibility in its reviews it could only make its listings considerably more useful to a large group of new readers, it could ultimately encourage inaccessible restaurants to make necessary steps so they meet ADA guidelines. Zagat Survey can demonstrate that it is in step with an era in which accessibility considerations have become an important part of public life. I hope that you will give serious consideration to these recommendations as a valuable improvement to the otherwise excellent service your company provides.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me at (212) 860-4906.

Very Truly Yours,



Micah Z. Kellner
Assembly Member

MZK/phc

cc: Matthew Sapolin, Commissioner, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities
Lawrence Carter-Long, Executive Director, Disabilities Network of New York City