

California Legislature

March 15, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Guidelines for Corporate Meetings and Events

Dear Governor Newsom:

We appreciate your commitment and dedication to keeping Californians safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. As you know, COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on various parts of the economy that are not conducive to telework, notably California's travel and tourism industry, and especially the business meetings segment.

We represent cities that rely on revenue from convention centers and the meetings that draw so many people into California. Before the pandemic, this industry employed workers in a wide range of jobs and skill sets, including janitors, servers, security staff, electricians, painters, chefs, and stage and audiovisual technicians. Sadly, due to current restrictions, many of our constituents are still out of work months after the initial shutdown.

Business meetings, trade shows and conventions are a major driver of California's broader tourism industry accounting for \$66.1 billion in total economic activity and 457,000 jobs in 2019, according to studies by Oxford Economics.^{1 2}

California is the only state that has prohibited business meetings of any size since the state's stay at home order went into effect on March 19, 2020. Other states are in various phases of allowing business meetings to take place. We are concerned that California's lack of guidelines for meetings, events and conventions will allow these states an opportunity to poach business that isn't scheduled to take place until 2022 and beyond.

¹ Oxford Economics, October 2020, "Economic Impact of Conventions and Trade Shows in California." (page 5)

"Total economic activity" represents direct, indirect, and induced impacts. "Direct impacts" consist of the direct spending and jobs that are directly involved in planning and producing conventions and trade shows, and for participants and exhibitors to travel to conventions and trade shows, as well as other convention- and trade show-related spending. "Indirect impacts" refers to supply chain impacts. "Induced impacts" occurs as employees spend their wages and salaries in the broader economy.

² Oxford Economics, October 2020, "Economic Impacts of Meetings in California." (page 6)

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This exploitation is happening because planning and booking for this sector of the economy requires several months and sometimes years of lead-time. Our convention centers, hotels and other meeting venues can't compete for *future* events when it appears California is closed to this business indefinitely, leaving on the table good-paying jobs and desperately needed local revenue. The Oxford studies also found that California is losing \$4.1 billion each month we continue to delay safe reopening for meetings and events.

The state's silence, lack of clarity and direction put California's communities at a competitive disadvantage to retain and secure business when the pandemic is long over. **This is why it is critical for the Administration to immediately release guidelines for the safe, future re-opening of business meetings, events, and conventions.**

We urge your Administration to consider the attached guidelines. A diverse coalition of organizations that manage convention and meeting venues and represent labor organizations and workers who depend on this business for their livelihoods prepared and submitted these guidelines in June 2020. These protocols adhere to safety standards established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the California Department of Public Health. They include best practice recommendations for sanitation, staff training, physical distancing, and communication.

Releasing these, or similar guidelines, is desperately needed to signal California is ready to compete for and win back future business, jobs, and revenue we are currently losing to other states.

If we don't act soon, many of these events and jobs will be lost forever. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell
Assembly District 70



Assemblymember Tom Daly
Assembly District 69



Senator Patricia Bates
Senate District 36



Assemblymember Richard Bloom
Assembly District 50



Assemblymember David Chiu
Assembly District 17



Assemblymember Steven Choi
Assembly District 68



Senator Brian Dahle
Senate District 1



Assemblymember Jim Frazier
Assembly District 11



Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia
Assembly District 56



Assemblymember James Gallagher
Assembly District 3



Senator Brian Jones
Senate District 38



Assemblymember Brian Maienschein
Assembly District 77



Assemblymember Devon Mathis
Assembly District 26



Assemblymember Chad Mayes
Assembly District 42



Senator Melissa Melendez
Senate District 28



Assemblymember Janet Nguyen
Assembly District 72



Senator Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh
Senate District 23



Assemblymember Miguel Santiago
Assembly District 53



Assemblymember Kelly Seyarto
Assembly District 67



Assemblymember Phil Ting
Assembly District 19



Senator Tom Umberg
Assembly District 19



Assemblymember Carlos Villapudua
Assembly District 13



Senator Scott Wiener
Senate District 11