



June 4, 2020

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker
Governor, State of Illinois
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker:

First of all, thank you for your tremendous leadership in these unprecedented times. The five-phase plan you released gives clarity and direction in how Illinois plans to safely and sustainably reopen. We are confident that you and your team have given great thought to balancing the health and welfare needs with the economic ones of Illinois' residents and citizens.

However, one area that may have potentially been overlooked is the nuance around "large gatherings," specifically as they relate to business trade shows, conventions, and events (collectively "business events"). There are several points that we'd like to call your attention to in the hopes that you will consider including business events in an earlier phase than phase 5:

- [CDC guidelines](#) on mass gatherings do not actually define and limit gathering size. While they give an example of 250 or more people as "large," the CDC explicitly says, "the cutoff threshold is at the discretion of community leadership based on the current circumstances the community is facing and the nature of the event." Their concern over large gatherings isn't with the number of people per se, but that more people "offer more opportunities for person-to-person contact and therefore pose greater risk of COVID-19 transmission."
 - **Business events are "controlled gatherings" able to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 transmissions:**
 - **Business events occur in convention centers, conference centers, and meeting hotels**—all closed and controllable environments that can be designed for maximum social distancing (e.g., aisle width, number of booths, queues), thus safely reducing opportunities for person-to-person contact (as per the CDC guidelines).
 - In addition to enhanced cleaning standards mentioned below, we have technology to reduce contact (e.g., electronic registration, touchless entry), ability to provide PPE to all participants, means to manage/reduce queuing (time in line, throughput management), and self-policing and auditing (frequent checks throughout the day to measure and ensure compliance).
 - **Business events—along with hotels, airlines, restaurants—are aligning around medically substantiated safety standards, which meet or exceed CDC guidelines, to ensure participant safety:**
 - The Global Biorisk Advisory Council has launched an [accreditation program](#) for the events industry, providing guidelines and protocols to ensure participant safety at certified venues. These standards have already been adopted by several facilities including McCormick Place and Hyatt Hotels.
 - **Business events are an ecosystem in which each participant is reliant on others for their own success, which ensures compliance** and self-policing that may not otherwise be expected.

- Business events have an amplifying impact on the local economy:
 - You, yourself, acknowledge the impact tourism, including that driven by business events, has on the local economy:
 - Using the same data sources (provided by U.S. Travel and Oxford Economics), we believe the total **direct contribution of business events to the Illinois economy in 2019 was \$15 billion, with \$1.1 billion in state and local taxes, and 122,600 jobs.**
 - Travel has an indirect and induced multiplier of 1.65. Business events have a higher multiplier of 2.60.
 - Further, business events have a catalytic impact (transactions enabled by trade shows and events), estimated to be 4–7x of direct spend.
 - If events have to wait on a vaccine, which is not currently projected to be available before January 2021 at the earliest, McCormick Place alone [could lose \\$1.8 billion this year](#), or \$144 million in desperately needed state and local taxes.
 - The impacts of reopening business events will be felt statewide—there is at least one convention center in each region outlined in your five-phase plan.
- **Business events are similarly, if not better, equipped to reopen safely as those you’ve included in Phase 3 and should therefore receive the same consideration:**
 - Employees of all nonessential businesses can return to work (including nonessential retail and manufacturing), as well as travel following CDC guidance. These businesses have the potential to result in “large gatherings” (e.g., more than 250 people), with less well-defined safety standards and processes to ensure adherence vs. business events.

Believe us when we say our interests are 100% aligned with yours, Governor Pritzker. We want to reopen business events safely and sustainably. This is our livelihood and to open up rashly or prematurely is not in our best interest. We hope we’ve made the case to you as to why we are prepared to help Illinois get back to business in a controlled and safe way. Our industry is doing the hard work needed to ensure participant safety. We’re simply asking for your fair consideration of that work in setting your reopening guidelines.

We look forward to your support.

Respectfully,



David Audrain
 Executive Director of the Society
 Of Independent Show Organizers
 Go LIVE Together Governance Committee



David DuBois
 President and CEO of the International
 Association of Exhibitions and Events
 Go LIVE Together Governance Committee

cc:

Larita Clark, CEO McCormick Place
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