



June 26, 2020

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

**Re: Reopening Convention Center and Meeting Venues with Safeguards**

Dear Governor Newsom:

Thank you for your leadership in charting the reopening plan for the state as we work together to help California emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We appreciate the open lines of communication you have given the travel and tourism industry during COVID-19 response, and especially as you consider recommendations and guidance to help in the decision-making process on reopening. The undersigned organizations represent convention centers, the destination marketing organizations responsible for bringing business to those venues, labor organizations whose workers depend on this business for their livelihood, and other related organizations who rely on the meetings and conventions business.

We completely agree that the first priorities in reopening travel to business meetings, including conventions and trade shows, are to safeguard the health of workers, residents, and customers, and to prevent a resurgence of infections. We have worked hard on a plan and a model that the rest of the nation can follow, that puts those safety considerations first. We have begun a dialogue and will continue to work with interested state and labor partners to ensure measurable standards that address both public health and worker health and safety.

We understand that business meetings represent a larger public health risk than opening local businesses to local residents. However, we believe that they are distinctly different and present much more controllable environments than other mass public gatherings. We would like the opportunity to explain the differences and how safely and responsibly reopening conventions and business meetings would be possible.

### **Mass Public Gatherings Versus Private Controlled Events**

At our convention centers and other large meeting venues, in working with our clients, we hold closed, controllable environments where we have a high level of control over who is invited to participate, how the space is configured for social distancing and flow, staff training, preparation and serving of food and beverage, configuration of bathroom facilities, crowd control, sanitation procedures, touchless transactions, etc.

Business events are similarly, if not better, equipped to open safely than other Phase 3 businesses that are open to the public and attract visitors from beyond the local community.

### **Industry Commitment to Sanitation, Staff Training, and Safety**

While we understand that there is risk when people come in from outside the immediate community, as the state begins to open up, we believe the contained environment of a closed meeting provides unique opportunities for enhanced safety procedures.

The convention centers and broader coalition have worked hard and collaboratively to create the attached plan with best practice recommendations for sanitation, staff training, physical distancing, and communication.

California business events—along with hotels, airlines, restaurants—are aligning around medically substantiated safety standards which meet or exceed CDC guidelines to ensure participant safety.

Our 13 largest convention centers in California also have committed to certifying their facilities with a new certificate program from the Global BioRisk Advisory Council, a division of ISSA—The Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association, to help the industry safely resume face-to-face events and assuage attendee concerns.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Global Biorisk Advisory Council® (GBAC), a Division of ISSA, unveiled its GBAC STAR facility accreditation program on cleaning, disinfection and infectious disease prevention. GBACSTAR is an outbreak prevention, response and recovery accreditation. The program establishes requirements to assist facilities with work practices, protocols, procedures, and systems to control risks associated with infectious agents, such as SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for COVID-19.

Three of the biggest convention centers in the United States – the Las Vegas Convention Center, Chicago’s McCormick Place and Orlando’s Orange County Convention Center – have signed on to achieve the new accreditation. Additionally, Hyatt Hotels and the Miami Dolphins

have publicly announced their intent to seek accreditation. The process involves self reporting the venue's planned cleaning protocols over 20 different criteria. There is an initial fee for signing up and an on-going annual fee.

Importantly, the convention centers are also committed to working with their counties to ensure that they meet all guidelines for reopening.

### **Impact of Conventions and Meetings for California's Economy and Workers**

California has long been a premiere destination for corporate meetings, industry conventions, and other business gatherings. Our combination of world-class facilities, outstanding restaurants, great weather, and incredible amenities have consistently made us a top choice for meetings.

The meetings and events business provides \$4.6 billion in economic impact and more than 270,000 jobs to its communities in California.

However, the state has lost hundreds of millions in revenue with the cancellation of more than 450 meetings and events in our convention centers so far, and more cancellations coming every day.

Before the pandemic, the conventions and business meetings industry in California employed workers in a wide range of jobs and skill sets including electricians, janitors, chefs, stage and audio visual technicians, servers, security staff, etc. With the convention centers closed for months, almost no one is employed. These affect some of our most vulnerable citizens, and the jobs will not come back quickly.

Meanwhile, as the uncertainty of California's timeline for reopening lingers, other competitive destinations such as Las Vegas, Atlanta, Orlando, and Miami are poised to capture California's market share. Conventions and meetings are making decisions now on whether to cancel their booked 2020 fall and winter events in California and move to different locations. And once a recurring event moves its venue, it can take years, if ever, to bring that business back to California.

In addition to providing direct revenue to communities, conventions and meetings boost the economy of the surrounding community, generating business for hotels, restaurants, attractions, retail, transportation services, and more. The industry provides much needed state and local tax revenues and these funds are needed now more than ever.

Our convention centers are also core to a vibrant downtown, active in raising money for community-related causes, hosting local events, and employing a diverse workforce.

Losing these signature conventions and meetings will dramatically reduce our state economy's prospects for recovery, sustain our high unemployment rate, and reduce the quality of life for residents.

### **Plan to Announce Reopening**

Meetings and events need three to five months' lead time to cancel or move, so existing commitments in California for 2020 fall and winter events are being evaluated now.

With that long lead time in mind, and the unique opportunities for safety that conventions and private meetings present since the environment is controllable, we are asking that convention centers be pre-approved by the state to host these committed events as soon as we can attest to adherence with state and county guidelines, and our plan.

This will permit the convention centers that are ready and approved, to inform customers that they will be able to host them after September 1, giving them the opportunity to hold on to the business that is in danger of cancelling and allow them to begin to book new business.

There are convention centers that know they will not be ready to be open for meetings and events by September 1 or do not have events scheduled until later. They will submit their application with an opening date once they know the date they can attest to be ready.

### **Other Relevant Guidance**

We have worked with our partners across the state, around the country and around the world to compile these world-class best practices, including CDC, ISSA, and corporate national and international partners.

We want to do everything we can to make sure we are addressing the state's safety concerns for a safe and productive future together and look forward to your feedback on this plan.

Sincerely,

Anaheim Convention Center  
ASM Global  
Blaine Event Services  
California Teamsters Public Affairs Council  
California Travel Association  
Contract Hotels  
Convention Electric, Inc.  
Freeman  
Fresno Convention & Entertainment Center  
GES Events  
Go Live Together  
Greater Ontario Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau  
IBEW Local 6 – San Francisco  
IBEW Local 11 – Greater Los Angeles  
IBEW Local 340 - Sacramento  
IBEW Local 440 - Riverside  
IBEW Local 441 – Orange County  
IBEW Local 569 – San Diego  
IBEW Local 595 - Oakland  
International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees

Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Long Beach Convention Center  
Los Angeles Convention Center  
Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board  
Moscone Center  
Oakland Convention Center  
Ontario Convention Center  
Painter & Allied Trades | District 36 Local Union 831  
Palm Springs Convention Center  
Pasadena Convention Center  
Raincross Hospitality Corporation  
Riverside Convention Center  
SAFE Credit Union Convention Center  
San Diego Convention Center  
San Diego Tourism Authority  
San Francisco Travel Association  
San Jose McEnery Convention Center  
Santa Clara Convention Center  
SEIU United Service Workers West  
Spectra  
Visit Anaheim  
Visit Oakland  
Visit Pasadena  
Visit Sacramento  
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