

To: Governor Gavin Newsom
From: California Travel Industry Recovery Coalition
Date: May 1, 2020
RE: COVID-19 Business Reopening Considerations

Dear Governor Newsom,

The undersigned travel and tourism associations would like to thank you and your staff for the hard work and leadership that you continue to display in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the invitation to contribute to the conversation about modifying the stay-at-home order and collaborating on reopening guidelines. As you have made clear, minimizing risk to public health and emphasizing safety are critical. To that end, we have an initial set of recommendations that support customer and employee safety, without being overly burdensome to travel and tourism businesses that are already struggling to survive due to extended closure.

Guidance, Not Mandates

California's travel and tourism industry is incredibly robust and varied in category, size, ownership type, and kind of experiences offered. It is also composed of many subsectors—hotels and lodging, restaurants, parks and attractions, outdoor recreation, wineries and breweries, campgrounds, retail, convention centers, and much more—that each provide vastly different scenarios within their subsectors for what social distancing may look like. It is our hope that you would create broad guidelines rather than prescriptive mandates, to allow flexibility for businesses to reopen with collaboration of local public health officials and safety as the driving factor.

Given the individuality of each business model, we also hope that the guidance is broad enough to allow for adaptable solutions to solve for the safety challenges. For example, we don't think generically setting capacity limits at specified numbers or percentages makes sense from a public health perspective if venues are able to meet CDC guidelines for physical distancing requirements. But we do support measures that any business can take, regardless of size or location, such as elevated sanitization measures, employee health screening, and updated COVID-19 training for employees.

Our members are already hard at work creating best practice recommendations in each of our industries. We know that successful hospitality employers post COVID-19 are going to be the ones that do a superior job at surpassing customer expectations and gaining customers' trust. We hope that the state sets broad stroke safety requirements, and then lets industry-led initiatives from those closest to the front lines determine the details on how to achieve the requirements. For example, [HERE](#) is what California Hotel and Lodging Association (CHLA) is sending out to hotels.

Adequate Personal Protective Equipment Supply

We recognize that reopening businesses while there aren't therapeutics available will require new sanitization protocols, physical distancing requirements, and increased reliance on protective gear. Unfortunately, as we all know, access to PPE is limited and preparing to open businesses means the demand will be even greater. Purchasing this equipment may be challenging for businesses who are facing financial hardship after weeks of closure. During a recent phone call with your GO-Biz staff the idea of buying cooperatives came up, which could

be an innovative way for getting equipment at a more reasonable cost, but we urge you to also consider providing businesses purchasing support.

Protection from Liability for Executing Mandatory Procedures

Travel and tourism are driven by visitor support and satisfaction. It is in everyone’s interest for our businesses to provide clean, safe environments and memorable experiences. Our industry is concerned that reopening could expose our businesses to unnecessary litigation in the event that a customer or employee contracts COVID-19 and attempts to seek damages. We hope you will consider providing limitations on liability to hospitality employers from claims that may arise from adherence to mandated procedures set by local health officials or from individuals who contract COVID-19 as a result of visiting or working at a tourism destination or business. It should be presumed that everyone takes on a bit of risk venturing out before therapeutics are available for COVID-19. Your continued public emphasis will be helpful to continue to socialize the idea of personal responsibility as Californians leave their homes before the stay-at-home order is fully lifted.

Minimum Wage Increase Deferral

Under SB 3, the minimum wage is scheduled to increase \$1 a year for three years for small businesses and a \$1 a year for two years for larger businesses. As you know, the finances of businesses of all sizes have been devastated due to extended closure, with those in the travel and tourism sector disproportionately hit. Those struggling to survive will not be able to cover the costs of these increases. Please consider using the statutory “off-ramps” that were put into the legislation to temporarily postpone the increase.

It is in everyone’s interest to get California up and running again. Travel and tourism can be an engine that drives recovery. It is our hope that our suggestions will be a jumping off point for further discussion. We will continue to share suggestions with you from our colleagues across the travel and tourism sector as more come forward. We appreciate you continuing the conversation with us to come up with solutions that will get California on the road to recovery.

Sincerely,

California Travel Recovery Coalition

