

March 15, 2021



Honorable Governor Northam
Office of the Governor Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

The National Association for Catering and Events (NACE) Richmond, VA Chapter and the Virginia events industry, are concerned about a lack of communication between your office and the Virginia events industry. The National Association for Catering and Events (NACE) is advocating on behalf of the wedding and events industry as a whole, comprised of a number of the state's top economic contributors. The industries include, but are not limited to:

- Tourism, contributing approximately 237,000 jobs, \$27 billion in annual spending, and \$1.8 billion in tax revenue;
- Hospitality, contributing approximately 78,739 jobs, and contributing an estimated revenue of \$330 million;
- Food service, comprised of approximately 15,507 businesses and providing Virginians with 378,600 jobs.

In the past two weeks, the state of Virginia has seen increased Covid-19 vaccinations and decreasing case numbers, which is a step in the right direction for the health of all Virginians. The state has responded by issuing guidance to concert and entertainment venues on February 24, 2021. The events industry, to this date, has not received any guidance and the state has yet to engage our group to assist in creating that guidance.

The following states have been showing support of the event industry, by either reopening events or releasing guidance for reopening events on the following dates; Maryland – March 12, New York – March 19, Rhode Island – March 19, Massachusetts – March 22, Maine – March 26. Additionally, the state of California will announce on March 19 guidance on reopening events.

National Association for Catering and Events (NACE) Richmond, VA Chapter and the Virginia events industry, has yet to hear how the state of Virginia is planning to handle the current situation. Our greatest concerns are that without effective communication about future plans to reopen the events industry two things will happen.

- Unlawful events will occur in the state of Virginia, which without regulation of effective guidelines, they will serve as super spreader events and also compromise the workplace environment.
- Business will move out of state, permanently damaging the previously flourishing event industry of Virginia. North Carolina has been operating at 30% capacity, with clear guidance from government and monthly adaptations based on updated Covid-19 information. With the additional reopening of Maryland at 50% capacity, business is actively moving out of Virginia to Maryland and North Carolina.

We ask that the Virginia government review the attached suggested event guidelines and include us in conversations about their application. These guidelines have been specifically written for the State of Virginia, based on the event guidelines created by the government in other states. Versions of these guidelines have also been submitted to the states of Illinois, Maine, New York, California and Florida as acceptable measures for providing safe events and gatherings.

We believe that our expertise and experience is a valuable voice in the Virginia hospitality industry. As future conversations about the Virginia event and hospitality industries arise, we hope that the government will look to our knowledge and engage us in these conversations. We ask for the opportunity to work with your office and government to reopen the Virginia event industry in a safe and productive way.

Sincerely,

National Association for Catering and Events Richmond Chapter

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