

February 19, 2021



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

Dear Governor Northam:

On behalf of the National Association for Catering and Events (NACE) Richmond, VA Chapter and the Virginia events industry, we write to you concerning the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the events industry and our interest in acting as a resource regarding group events.

The events industry relies on group gatherings, which are currently restricted to protect the public from the transmission of Covid-19. The Virginia events industry supports and complies with these public health measures.

These measures do, however, have a significant economic impact on national, state and local economies. The U.S. wedding business is a \$74 billion industry, employing more than 1.2 million people, according to IBIS World. Other meetings, events, and trade shows account for 5.9 million jobs in the U.S. and \$249 billion in labor income. In 2019, the Richmond Region alone hosted 7.7 million visitors who spent \$2.6 billion or \$7 mill per day. Hotels and sales & occupancy revenue was \$330 million. An economic study conducted by the Events Industry Council and Oxford Economics, in 2018, concluded that “the meetings sector supported more direct jobs than many large manufacturing sectors, including machinery, food, auto, and chemical. It sustained more jobs than telecommunications.”

Unlike other businesses, such as the restaurant or retail sectors, the events industry cannot open doors and produce events on the first day of loosened restrictions. Our businesses rely on planning events and projecting revenue months and even years in advance. In order to prepare to once again provide corporate events and social occasions, event businesses will need clear advance guidance on reopening. We ask that any reopening plans provide detailed guidelines, stages and timelines that help us plan for our businesses and communicate with employees, subcontractors and clients.

The NACE Richmond, VA Chapter has created a NACE Covid-19 Task Force to address these concerns and we have written guidelines on how to safely execute events in Virginia. We ask that the Virginia government adopt these 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, 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 look towards the future of events in Virginia.

Sincerely,

National Association for Catering and Events Richmond Chapter

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