

February 4, 2021

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer  
State of Michigan  
P.O. Box 30013  
Lansing, MI 48909

**Re: Immediate support needed for wedding and banquet venues**

Dear Governor Whitmer:

The continued shuttering of wedding and banquet venues has had devastating effects on these businesses and livelihoods across the State of Michigan. Our industry needs immediate action in order to survive.

Our venues are where people come together to celebrate and start their lives in front of the people closest to them. We are critical to the fabric and culture of the communities we serve and enrich.

Unfortunately, we are still left out. It is unfair to single out banquet venues and limit them to a 10-person threshold when there are other instances that allow safe gatherings of 100-guests at a time.

**We need immediate action to allow us the chance to safely serve our guests.** We have worked with our peers on best practices in to adapt to the public health requirements and are prepared to reopen. We just need the opportunity to put these practices into operation.

Wedding and banquet venues have a massive contribution to the economic vitality of our communities. Our operations impact more than ourselves and our family of employees. We support numerous vendors, fill hotels and attract visitors to nearby amenities in our community.

With the hope of the vaccine distribution and declining number of cases, almost all other sectors of the economy have been afforded the opportunity to return to work and support themselves. All we ask for is the same opportunity.

We would like to meet with your staff and MDHHS to discuss the need for changes to the emergency orders, clarity on the metrics and goals to allow us to reopen or increase capacity in a way that will protect public health but also give us a fighting chance.

**While others are seeing a light at the end of the tunnel, we are still left in the dark. If we cannot discuss further, we strongly urge that it be a primary goal to allow operations of sufficient capacity by April 1 in order for the industry to survive.**

Lastly, there is also dire need for targeted grant funds, similar to the support given to live concert venues, especially if we cannot establish more certainty around the coming weeks and months. The unknowns and importance of the ceremonies we host will have a lasting impact into the transition of post-pandemic normalcy.

Please contact Joshua Lunger at 616.771.0336 or [josh@grandrapids.org](mailto:josh@grandrapids.org) with questions or to schedule time to discuss further. Thank you for your consideration.

CC: Director Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS

Sincerely,

Dan Peerbolte, Happy Hens Farm.

Hannah Natale, The Broadway Avenue LLC

Matt and Josh Rubino- Revel Center Events

Lori Bestrom, Venue3Two

Kimberly Lemmen Braat, Gilmore Catering, Baker Events, The Gilmore Collection

Ben Peterson, The Cheney Place

Kelsi M. Gaunt; The Harris Building

Kristie Emmons, Crossroads Conference Center.

Lynn DeNave, Warehouse 6 (Artisan Events LLC)

Candice and Brian Grant; Port 393

Jan Bylsma; The Bluff Banquet Center

Kelli and Mitch VanOverloop; The Old Wooden Barn LLC

Kylie Martolock & Bing Goei; The Goei Center

Nelson Katy, Hydrangea Blu Barn

Loren Hansen, The Rutledge

Rob DeVerna, The Lit GR

Kristen VanderMolen, Heritage Barn Co.

Tim Schowalter, New Vintage Place

Lindsey Johnson, Venue St. George

Patti Zylstra, South Haven Creations

Ryan Burns, Studio D2D

Claire Zuwala, The Ballroom at McKay

Sunni Lawson, The Waddell Center; Grandville Banquet Center; Wyoming Banquet Center