



February 22, 2021

His Excellency Charles D. Baker, Governor
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
State House, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker:

On behalf of the Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau (GSCVB) and the undersigned businesses, I write to you today with respect to the tourism and hospitality industry in Western Massachusetts, which has faced devastating impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tourism and hospitality is the third largest industry in Massachusetts, and no other industry has seen such staggering economic and job loss. As we near the one-year anniversary of the public health emergency and ensuing shut downs of venues, businesses and attractions across Massachusetts, we see light at the end of the tunnel. With effective vaccines being distributed and key public health metrics trending in the right direction, we are ready and eager to open our doors safely to welcome guests and, with mitigation measures in place, deliver successful spring and summer tourism seasons.

As hospitalizations continue to decline and vaccine distribution picks up speed, ***we ask your administration to begin to increase capacity limitations for gatherings, allow shuttered exhibition venues to safely re-open, and provide a clear timeline that details expectations for the months ahead.***

In order for our industry to bring back employees, welcome visitors and have a chance to begin our recovery, we need expanded capacity and clear guidance from your administration. As you know, many of our region's premier attractions remain shuttered, and those that are open are operating under capacity limitations that are impractical for economic survival.

Heading into the spring and summer months, restaurants, caterers, hotels, venues and the numerous businesses which service them would normally be gearing up for weddings, graduations and other social celebrations. Under current guidelines, these businesses and the customers planning for these events are faced with mixed messages and uncertainty. Businesses report that numerous weddings planned for June and July are being cancelled or postponed due to strict capacity limits. Moreover, business owners are unable to offer any assurances or plan for when capacity limits will increase so as to rebook the events.

Similarly, our area attractions, including the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame which is planning for their annual enshrinement at the MassMutual Center and the Eastern States Exposition which must plan for numerous trade shows and the annual Big E fair in September, have serious concerns with respect to their ability to hold these high-profile events which typically generate hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue for the Western Mass economy.

New York has recently announced a date of March 15th when indoor gatherings will be permitted for up to 150 guests. New Jersey has already adopted such a measure and it has been reported that Connecticut is considering moving in a similar direction. Without this type of guidance in place in Massachusetts, we are in imminent danger of losing substantial business to neighboring states.

I am sure you can understand that the types of events referenced above take time to plan. We recognize that as we deal with a global pandemic there will always be a degree of uncertainty. However, without the ability to prepare, tourism and hospitality faces another lost season from which we are deeply concerned that many of our businesses, venues and attractions will not survive.

As always, I am available to discuss this matter further with you at any time. I can be reached at 413-537-2214 or by email at mkwydra@explorewesternmass.com. I thank you for your attention to this request, and for all of your efforts to see Massachusetts through this crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Kay Wydra". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mary Kay Wydra
President
Greater Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau

GSCVB Member Businesses: