



June 4, 2020

The Honorable Lori Lightfoot  
Mayor, City of Chicago  
121 N LaSalle Street  
Chicago City Hall 4th Floor  
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Mayor Lightfoot:

With the launch of your COVID-19 Recovery Taskforce, we believe you understand the criticality of gathering diverse perspectives to help you balance the health and economic needs of Chicago and its diverse communities, particularly communities of color whose economic interests have been historically sidelined and who have suffered the most during this pandemic.

We are part of a broader business events coalition, [Go LIVE Together](#), that includes over 600 businesses and 2,000 members. Business events, as you know Mayor Lightfoot, are a huge economic driver for Chicago and include a long history of businesses supporting the city:

- 2,421 meetings booked in 2018 contributed [\\$4 billion in economic impact](#)
  - Using the same data sources as in previous economic impact studies (e.g., U.S. Travel and Oxford Economics), we believe the total **direct contribution of business events to the Chicago economy in 2019 was \$4.2 billion, with \$367 million in state and local taxes, and 54,600 jobs.**
  - Tourism has an indirect and induced multiplier of 1.65. Business events have a higher multiplier of 2.60, which means a dollar of spend in business events goes twice as far.
  - Further, business events have a catalytic impact (transactions enabled by trade shows and events), estimated to be 4–7x of direct spend.
- McCormick Place is not only the largest convention center in North America, but it's the 11<sup>th</sup> largest in the world, with McCormick Square drawing more than 2.5 million visitors annually
  - If events have to wait on a vaccine (as required if we remain in Phase 5), which is not projected to be available before January at the earliest, McCormick Place alone [could lose \\$1.8 billion this year](#), or \$144 million in desperately needed state and local taxes.
- The guidelines issued by Governor Pritzker may result in show organizers, some who have supported Chicago for decades, to consider alternative locations:
  - The Western Roentgen Society (the precursor to RSNA (The Radiological Society of North America) has been meeting in Chicago since 1915.
  - IMTS (International Manufacturing Technology Show) has taken place at McCormick Place since 1978. It's last show in 2018, drew a record-breaking 129,415 attendees and featured 2,563 companies.
  - PACK EXPO has come to Chicago every other year since 1996, bringing with it 2,500 companies representing 40+ industries and 45,000 attendees.

We are 100% aligned with Governor Pritzker's intent with his reopening plan—we also want to reopen business events safely and sustainably. This is our livelihood and to open up rashly or prematurely is not in the best interest of our own workers. Additionally, we strongly believe we are able to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmissions, and as “controlled gatherings,” we should be considered separately from “mass gatherings” such as concerts and festivals:

- [CDC guidelines](#) on mass gatherings explicitly say, “the cutoff threshold is at the discretion of community leadership based on the current circumstances the community is facing and the nature of the event.”

- **Business events are “controlled gatherings” able to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 transmissions:**
  - Business events occur in convention centers, conference centers, and meeting hotels—all closed and controllable environments that can be designed for maximum social distancing (e.g., aisle width, number of booths, queues), thus safely reducing opportunities for person-to-person contact (as per the CDC guidelines).
  - In addition to enhanced cleaning standards mentioned below, we have technology to reduce contact (e.g., electronic registration, touchless entry), ability to provide PPE to all participants, means to manage/reduce queuing (time in line, throughput management), and self-policing and auditing (frequent checks throughout the day to measure and ensure compliance).
- **Business events—along with hotels, airlines, restaurants—are aligning around medically substantiated safety standards, which meet or exceed CDC guidelines, to ensure participant safety:**
  - The Global Biorisk Advisory Council has launched an [accreditation program](#) for the events industry, providing guidelines and protocols to ensure participant safety at certified venues. These standards have already been adopted by several facilities including McCormick Place and Hyatt Hotels.
- **Business events are an ecosystem in which each participant is reliant on others for their own success, which ensures compliance and self-policing that may not otherwise be expected.**
- **Business events are similarly, if not better, equipped to reopen safely as those included in Phase 3 and should therefore receive the same consideration:**
  - Employees of all nonessential businesses can return to work (including nonessential retail and manufacturing), as well as travel following CDC guidance. These businesses have the potential to result in “large gatherings” (e.g., more than 250 people), with less well-defined safety standards and processes to ensure adherence vs. business events.

We are prepared to help Chicago and its communities get back to business in a controlled and safe way that protects health of the city’s citizens and visitors. It is imperative to our city’s economic recovery and our communities’ economic recovery that we be allowed to do so, as soon as it is prudent. Our industry will do the hard work, with you Mayor Lightfoot, that is needed to ensure participant safety.

We would love the opportunity to discuss our plans further with you and your staff. We look forward to your support.

Respectfully,



**David Audrain**  
Executive Director of the Society  
Of Independent Show Organizers  
Go LIVE Together Governance Committee



**David DuBois**  
President and CEO of the International  
Association of Exhibitions and Events  
Go LIVE Together Governance Committee

cc:

Larita Clark, CEO McCormick Place  
John Coli, Jr, Secretary-Treasurer, Teamsters Local 727  
Eric M Dean, General President International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Ironworkers  
Anthony DeGrado, President, United Steelworkers (USW) Local 17U Decorators Union  
Robert Fulton, Business Manager, Riggers Local 136