



OPEN MI MEETINGS & EVENTS

April 28, 2021

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

Dear Governor Whitmer:

With the vaccine rollout well underway in Michigan, it's time to set a date when we can welcome indoor meetings, conventions and events back to the Great Lakes State and reclaim billions in revenue lost to the pandemic.

We urge you to reopen our indoor meeting, convention and event space:

- **By June 1 at 50% capacity**
- **By July 1 at 75% capacity**

This schedule is well-aligned with President Biden's priorities, projections and promises as they relate to the vaccine. We commend the President for making the vaccine a top priority. We have confidence in his projection that we will have enough vaccine supply for every adult in America by the end of May. And we celebrate with him as he looks toward the 4th of July as a day when we can begin to mark our independence from this virus.

We trust science. We also trust our State and local public health officials to leverage national priorities and get shots in the arms of all residents age 16 and up this spring. To this end, we applaud the collaborative efforts by our health departments, health systems and venue operators to transform convention centers and arenas into mass vaccination clinics that have safely and efficiently handled the high volume of vaccinations made possible by ramped up production and new government contracts.

These are bold and decisive steps toward mitigating this health crisis. Now, let's take a similarly bold step and align our timeline for reopening this industry that is vital to our state and local economies.

In support of a reopening – and to protect lives and livelihoods – we join you in advocating that ALL adults in Michigan, including our employees, colleagues, constituents, member organizations, vendors and clients, get a vaccine as soon as possible. This is the clearest path to reopening.



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Our meeting, convention and event industry has been devastated by the pandemic. It was one of the first hit and remains among the most tightly restricted and deeply impacted. Tens of thousands of Michigan hotel, food service and venue workers lost their jobs. In fact, 38% of all jobs lost nationwide because of the pandemic were in the hospitality, entertainment and travel sector. **No other industry and labor force has been hit harder.**

With capacity limits at 25, many venues remain effectively shuttered and thousands remain out of work. The irony is this industry is among the best equipped to ensure safety protocols are in place. Inherent in the successful operation of our event venues is crowd control, security and safety practices. We are positioned to support contact tracing among meeting attendees. And we are open to exploring ways to partner with the State to employ antigen testing for meeting, convention and event guests as we begin to reopen.

It's time to establish parity with Michigan restaurants and other businesses already at 50% or higher capacity and bring Michigan in line with neighboring Great Lakes States. Our industry needs a reasonable timetable so we can confirm bookings, rehire and train staff and begin the process of reclaiming Michigan's leadership position in the meeting and event industry.

We ask for your trust in the people and businesses of Michigan. Align policy with the promises of our President and of the vaccine. Trust our meeting, convention and event venues to live up to the Pure Michigan brand that they helped build and allow them to responsibly reopen their doors – and the door to this great state.

Thank you for your consideration and for your leadership.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned support the Open MI Meetings & Events plan

CC: George Cook
Sean Egan
Jen Flood
Meghan Groen
Elizabeth Hertel
JoAnne Huls
David Knezek
Mark Totten
Sarah Triplett



OPEN MI MEETINGS & EVENTS

SUPPORTERS: OPEN MI MEETINGS & EVENTS PLAN

MaryAnne Ackerman, Mayor
City of Frankenmuth

Rick Baker, President & CEO
Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce

Rosalynn Bliss, Mayor
City of Grand Rapids

Jonathan Block, General Manager
The Dow Event Center &
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Gary Carey, Mayor
City of Walker

Thelma Castillo, President and CEO
Blue Water Area Chamber

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Mike Guswiler, President
West Michigan Sports Commission

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Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance

Chris Hart, Executive Director
Holland Civic Center Place

Linda Hart, Executive Director
Holland Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

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Veronica Horn, President/CEO
Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce

Scott Keith, President & CEO
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Mary Kerr, President & CEO
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Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce

Robert Lukens, Executive Director
Visit Muskegon

Richard MacKeigan, ASM Global Regional GM
Van Andel Arena & DeVos Place

Mike Malach, Executive Director
Ann Arbor Sports Commission

Martin Manna, President
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Douglas Small, President & CEO
Experience Grand Rapids

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