



May 7, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy, and Schumer:

On behalf of the Chemung County Chamber of Commerce, I wanted to thank you for your leadership and continued work to guide Americans through this crisis and rebuild our economy. To that end, we ask that you support the National Independent Venue Association’s (NIVA) effort to protect independent venues and promoters in this time of unprecedented crisis. We urge you to support the Cornyn/Carper letter in the Senate or the Cleaver/Williams letter in the House that supports federal assistance for independent entertainment venues.

The future of this industry is in jeopardy, especially considering they were the first to close and may very well be the last to reopen. It’s estimated that nearly 90% of independent venues across the nation may close permanently as a result of this crisis. Here in New York’s Southern Tier, we honestly can’t imagine a year without entrepreneurial venues like Tag’s Summer Stage offering three seasons of entertainment for our region to enjoy.

The permanent closing of a venue like Tag’s would have serious repercussions on our overall local economy, well beyond quality of life. Independent entertainment venues are economic multipliers and community builders; a recent study estimated that \$1 spent at a small venue resulted in \$12 of economic activities for neighboring restaurants, hotels and retail shops. Not only is supporting these venues important for their economic well-being, but also for the economic recovery of our entire region.

As they follow guidelines necessary to protect public health and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on our communities, independent entertainment venues face

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tremendous financial hardship. On behalf of these institutions, we respectfully request that you consider the following solutions to address the unique situation facing their industry:

- Modify the existing PPP program, including a separate allotment of funds for businesses that are completely closed in accordance with government-mandated social distancing guidelines and are severely distressed.
- Consider tickets sold by small and medium sized promoters for canceled and postponed events to be considered “distressed inventory” for tax purposes.
- Expand eligibility to include shuttered businesses who are recipients of PPP loans and continue this benefit until the industry is able to resume normal operations at full legal capacity.
- Request that federal taxes for shuttered businesses be deferred until at least six months after the industry is able to resume normal operations at full legal capacity.
- Continue additional federal support for unemployment insurance for employees of shuttered businesses, including contract workers and artists who otherwise do not have access to relief.
- Develop a solution to allow commercial rent and mortgage payments to be abated without lease cancellation until shuttered businesses are able to resume normal operations at full legal capacity.
- Allow shuttered businesses to defer existing debt payments, and to prohibit creditors from moving to bankruptcy proceedings, requiring personal guarantees, or collecting collateral.
- Establish national guidelines for resuming and continuing large gatherings in a safe manner to ensure uniformity throughout the industry.
- Provide assistance to businesses to comply with any new health guidelines required for independent entertainment venues to return to normal operations.

These proposals will serve as a vital lifeline for the independent entertainment industry and their community of employees and artists. We thank you for your consideration and hope that we will have your support.

Sincerely,

Kamala A. Keeley  
President & CEO