

You are just moments away from completing the easy and necessary steps to explain how critical the safe reopening of events is in Dane County, WI.

- 1) [Click this link](#) to determine who your local Dane County Supervisor is.
- 2) [Click this link](#) to find your local Dane County Supervisors contact information. If you reside in a different location than your business, you may have two different supervisors.
- 3) Write an email to your Dane County Supervisor(s) using the templated letter below, adjusted to your personal preferences and information.
- 4) On the email, cc the following local officials:
parisi@countyofdane.com - Joe Parisi, Dane County Exec
wescott@countyofdane.com - Josh Wescott, Dane Co Exec Chief of Staff
mbottari@cityofmadison.com - Mary Bottari, Mayor's Chief of Staff
Lvakunta@cityofmadison.com - Linda Vakunta, Deputy Mayor
mmikolajewski@cityofmadison.com - Matt Mikolajewski - City of Madison, Economic Development Director
- 5) Send!

It would mean even more if after you have sent your letter, that you reach out to all your own personal event contacts and ask them to do the same as well. We will only see progress if we continue on with the same strong message, all together.

Letter Template- please copy and paste below into your email body:

Dear Supervisor –

My name is _____ and I own/work

I want to bring attention to a crisis that the wedding and event industry is facing during the COVID pandemic in Dane County. Please follow the links listed below for recent articles in the Wisconsin State Journal and Cap Times.

[WSJ Article - Madison-area event venues look for safe reopening in 2021](#)

[Cap Times - Event businesses pay steep price for COVID restrictions, unpredictability](#)

The Dane County wedding and event industry has effectively been shut down since the pandemic began in March, over 10 months ago. Since July 1st, gatherings have been limited to 10 people, with a complete shutdown in November before Thanksgiving. While it's true that we're all in this together, small business owners have been paying a huge and devastating personal price to keep people safe.

A survey released recently by the area chapter of the National Association of Catering and Events shows that over half of all responding Dane County venues and event-related businesses reported they have lost 75 to 100 percent of their 2020 revenues – and 47 percent report they already have or will close their doors within 8 months if no changes are made to ordinances.

Another fourth said they've lost at least half their revenue in 2020 – and 17 percent of all respondents said they're likely to fail in the next one to three months, while only 18 percent said they'll likely survive for the foreseeable future.

The local event industry is aligned with local leaders and the county health department in wanting a data-driven, scientific approach to reopening. We are not suggesting events be allowed to operate at full capacity tomorrow. Working together with the health department and county, we can fine-tune these restrictions, so they can do a more targeted job of protecting public health any safety. We believe adopting a scientific, capacity-based approach to restrictions can save our industry. This is how Milwaukee, Minnesota, Michigan and several other cities and states are approaching gathering restrictions.

Capacity-Based Restrictions

- Rather than a hard cap at 10, regardless of building size, events in commercial facilities should be allowed to operate at a percentage of capacity, just like every other business in Dane County
 - o It doesn't make sense that a 100,000 square foot building is allowed the same amount of people as a 500 square foot room.
 - o Staggered entrancing and existing can be utilized to ensure a distanced entry and exit from a venue

Commercial facilities vs. private residences

- Events held in commercially licensed facilities with required masking, social distancing, and risk mitigation plans should be allowed to operate at a higher percentage of capacity than events held in private homes, which are nearly impossible to enforce.

The data that the health department is using to restrict gatherings lacks nuance and treats all gatherings the same – it's not broken out by commercial vs. private, Dane Co vs. outside of Dane Co, etc. We know where and how an event is held matters in terms of spreading virus. Masking matters. Distancing matters. Commercial ventilation matters. If we are touting a data-driven approach, we need to actually be collecting detailed data. Local businesses have been asking the health department for this for months, with no action.

As I'm sure you are aware – surrounding Wisconsin counties have few, if any restrictions. Dane County's 10 person gathering restriction has had the unintended consequence of forcing events to other counties and to private residences – with few if any safety precautions. Engaged couples are cancelling with their Dane County venue and moving their 200 person weddings outside the county. The wedding party and their guests then return home to Dane County

giving us the worst of both worlds – substantially increased public health risks while also forcing the collapse of local venues. No strategy is risk-free, but holding events at regulated, commercial facilities at a small percentage of capacity would certainly be safer than having events move outside the county to unregulated environments.

We need an updated Forward Dane plan before all revenue from 2021 is lost, and more small businesses close their doors. Events in Q1 and Q2 of 2021 have already been cancelled or moved outside of the county. Weddings are planned years in advance, so the events industry will be feeling the effects of this well into 2021. An updated Forward Dane plan must be developed for future reopening to give our couples reassurance their wedding/event can be hosted in Dane County. The Forward Dane plan is outdated and PHMDC cannot continue to implement restrictions based on individual orders issued at a moment's notice. A phased reopening based on "order to order" approach does not allow us in the wedding and event industry to plan accordingly as events are planned a year or longer in advance. We deserve a thought out, reasonable, scientific-based plan that takes into consideration vaccine implementation that allows our businesses to operate safely in the coming months.

This isn't a matter of small businesses versus public health. We live in Dane County and care deeply about our community. We want to work together with public health and local leaders in order to keep people safe and hang onto our businesses. We have patiently waited 10 months for the opportunity to operate our businesses in Dane County, at a devastating personal cost. We cannot wait any longer if we want to ensure the survival of our business, the wedding/event industry as a whole and most importantly our livelihood. We deserve action from elected officials like yourself to act on the concerns of the community members you represent. Can we count on you to help push for change with public health and the executive's office to save the wedding/event industry in Dane County?