



The City of Burlingame

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September 22, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: State Blueprint for a Safer Economy (Hotels and Lodging)
Request for Consideration**

Dear Governor Newsom:

I am writing on behalf of the Burlingame City Council to request that the State reconsider its strict prohibition on hotel gatherings. Specifically, we hope that the State will allow gatherings of up to 50 people for organized meetings to alleviate the hardships facing our hotel and lodging industry.

The City Council's Economic Development Subcommittee (presently comprised of Vice Mayor O'Brien Keighran and Councilmember Ricardo Ortiz) convened with Burlingame's hoteliers and the San Mateo County/Silicon Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau (SMCCVB) on September 9, 2020. During that meeting, the hoteliers described the dramatic reduction in occupancy rates they have faced, with rates falling from nearly 90% in the previous year, to approximately 20% currently. As San Mateo County progresses on the State's Blueprint for a Safer Economy tier list, these occupancy rates will increase, albeit at a much slower rate than previously anticipated.

Given Burlingame's proximity to the San Francisco International Airport, Burlingame hotels have traditionally served corporate travelers and hosted corporate events. As the State currently prohibits gatherings, this once-thriving sector is suffering. On behalf of the City's hoteliers, the City Council therefore requests that organized gatherings of up to 50 people be permitted. The City's hotel and lodging industry is committed to providing a safe experience and will follow all State guidance for social distancing, face coverings, frequent cleanings, and prohibition of shared food and drink. In addition, all gatherings will only accept registered attendees in an effort to minimize community spread and assist with local contact tracing efforts. We believe this would be in keeping with the standards for places of worship, which are currently permitted to host gatherings for 25% of their maximum capacity, or 100 people (whichever is less).

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While this request is made on behalf of the City's hoteliers, it is also an important consideration for the City's fiscal health. Burlingame's smart budgeting in the past has allowed the City to prevent layoffs of staff and continue to provide exceptional service to Burlingame residents and businesses. However, as the City's budget is historically bolstered by transient occupancy tax (TOT) revenues, the unprecedented downturn in travel and leisure spending is likely to pose difficulties in the future. The adopted budget for fiscal year 2020-21 projects a nearly 50% decline in TOT compared to FY 2018-19 revenues.

For the reasons described above, the City of Burlingame is requesting that you consider permitting safely organized gatherings of up to 50 people to assist the hotel and lodging industry.

Sincerely,

Emily Beach
Mayor

cc: State Senator Jerry Hill
State Assembly Member Kevin Mullin
John Hutar, President and CEO, San Mateo County/Silicon Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau