To: Governor Brown, Leah Horner, Patrick Allen, Oregon Health Authority,

Dear Leaders,

Oregon's Venues, Arts and Entertainment Entities, Live Events Companies and Workers, Wedding Halls, and Event Spaces (hereafter referred to as simply "venues" or "events"), Fairs, Festivals, and Rodeos would like to assure Oregon's citizens that venues are the safest place that people can be, as we reopen after this terrible year. This is true especially of open-air venues, where there will likely be less transmission of the virus.

As Oregon reopens, please know that venues are the best equipped entities to handle gatherings, groups of people, flow of persons into utility and other spaces, manage cleaning and monitoring staff. There is simply no industry better situated to handle the safe, orderly flow of people, while simultaneously enforcing safety guidelines.

With this in mind, **venues should not be treated in any more restrictive capacity than restaurants, churches, or any other types of gatherings**. In venues, people are not removing masks for a long duration (to eat full meals). In venues, highly trained staff are monitoring the flow of patrons and visitors — in fact, it is the primary purpose of these employees. Venues are highly regulated spaces where the health and safety of our patrons, staff and artists always have and always will be the highest priority.

Venues hope to partner with the State of Oregon in making our people safe, through messaging campaigns, education and production. We are able to help promote vaccination through our immense outreach and effective public messaging capabilities.

*We propose four simple guiding principles for reopening:*

 **1. For equity, fairness, and for Oregon’s recovery, venues must be given the same guiding principles as any other spaces, including churches, bars and restaurants.**

**2. The events industry needs consistent "ramp up time" - events take months to plan, produce, promote, market and sell, etc. Any sudden changes or unnecessary backtracking is economically destructive and could lead to the demise of these already imperiled businesses and nonprofits.**

We cannot overstate the economic damage that would be sustained by instituting, but then changing, capacity or operating restrictions. Most of the cost of putting on an event is incurred well before the event. Venues build their events around a complicated calendar of “held” dates that involve routing of talent, attractions, equipment, contractors, services, and more. Planning is a long and complicated process for most events.

Oregon is a key part of a national ecosystem of touring shows (from rock and roll to rodeos) and cannot be the "missing link" due to overly complicated or inconsistent guidelines. The devastation to our local economy would be incalculable if all these large events were to route through Idaho or Montana instead.  A significant number of Oregon events occur in the summer months.

**3. Venues should be allowed to operate at full capacity, with all appropriate safety guidelines being practiced, 30 days after a county hits the Minimal Spread level (“Low Risk” designation) AND the vaccine has been made available to all adult persons.** Once a county has hit minimal spread levels and the vaccine is available and can be  delivered to all adults, then safety precautions should consist of only what is scientifically sensible and necessary to maintain safety and prevent transmission. Once the vaccine has been made readily available to all adults who want one, we must trust the people of Oregon to make informed choices for themselves and their families and trust our live event venues to continue to ensure the health and safety of their patrons as they have been doing for years.

**4. Interim Capacity Restrictions:** If the state must restrict capacities in the interim, it should be based on science and data (rather than a simple integer). Any such calculations should be based on the percentage of a venue's normal allowable capacity. A bare capacity restriction of 250, for example, allows the same number of people to attend an indoor venue with a 5,000 square foot building as can attend an outdoor, 10,000 acre festival. Normal capacity restrictions that are maintained and enforced (by health and fire officials) should be the basis of any potential interim capacity calculations.

Regarding capacity restrictions: virtually all venues in Oregon are simply unable to operate at anything less than 60% capacity. Some states have issued a ramp-up program by month or have tied it to vaccine rollout, but please understand that no venue is able to operate at all (let alone sustainably) at 25% or 50%.

Outdoor venues should have an accelerated schedule for reaching full capacity, since outdoor air is less likely to allow for transmission of the virus.  For outdoor venues, we request that capacity restrictions be removed.  Masks and enhanced cleaning regimen should be followed until each relevant country reaches “low risk” designation.

For all other venues, we propose the following schedule (capacity based on percentage of venue fire code capacity):

*Once counties reach Oregon’s “Low Risk” designation****:***

*Indoor Venues* may operate at 50% capacity with six (6) foot physical distancing between parties — masks required. Parties of no more than eight (8) people.

*Outdoor Venues* can operate at 100% capacity, with six (6) foot physical distancing and mask required. *Note that at the point where “Low Risk” is achieved, the vast majority of those at the highest risk of contracting and becoming gravely ill from COVID-19 will have been vaccinated (91% of deaths and 86% of hospitalizations occur in populations age 65 and older).* Allowing for restrictions on venues to be lifted as vaccine phases are completed will allow for these vital industries to rebuild.

*THEN:*

*30 days following implementation of Phase 1B: Group 7,* indoor venues may operate 65% capacity, physical distancing requirements go to three feet (3’) (recent studies and the WHO agree that there is no difference between 3’ and 6’. Masks required.

*30 days following implementation of Phase 2: Group 1,* Venues may operate at 80% capacity, and physical distancing requirements are removed - Masks required

*30 days following implementation of Phase 2: Group 2,* Venues can operate at 100%, Mask requirement removed, unless otherwise mandated by the State (Events will follow current statewide masks mandates as outlined by OHA). This is the same scenario as #3 above, assuming the vaccine rollout continues on schedule.

**Venues and events are crucial to Oregon's recovery, more so than almost any other industry. The economic impact of events is immense, studies have shown that for every dollar spent on a ticket, twelve more go directly into the local economy.** People fall in love with Oregon's beaches and natural beauty, but they don't participate in our economy in a meaningful way until they stop, see a show, have dinner, get a hotel, or plan a return trip to a festival. Further, Oregon's event spaces are the voicebox for who we are: our story is told on the stages, in the arenas and theaters of the state. The decisions we make today can bring Oregon into a position of strength and sustainability for jobs, tourism and its tax base. Alternatively, if we make unsteady decisions, the damage would be unmitigable for an industry that is already standing on the edge.

 We ask that you consider these principles when making your decisions regarding reopening Oregon. See attached economic impact numbers and relevant data.

Sincerely,

Oregon's Venues, Arts and Entertainment Entities, Live Events Companies and workers, Wedding Halls, and Event Spaces

Signed by (please chime in with notes and permissions once we massage this copy):

X Independent Venue Coalition

X Live Events Industry of Oregon

P5 Portland 5

X Music Portland

X Pendleton Roundup

X FairBridge

X Oregon Shakespeare Festival

X Pickathon

X Waterfront Blues Festival

X Britt Music and Arts Festival

X String Summit

X Monqui Presents

X Wonder Ballroom

X Doug Fir

X Portland Center Stage

X McMenamins

X Hult Center for the Performing Arts

X Les Schwab Amphitheater

X Cuthbert Amphitheater

X McDonald Theatre

X Kesey Enterprises Inc.

X Revolution Hall

X Mississippi Studios

X Eugene Symphony

Oregon Symphony

X Sisters Folk Festival

X Portland Opera

Oregon Ballet