



March 24, 2021

The Honorable Steven Johnson
N-1091 House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Chair Johnson & members of the House Oversight Committee:

On behalf of the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance and its 16 chambers and economic development organizations representing over 7,000 member businesses, we submit this testimony in support of our region's wedding and banquet venues and funeral homes.

The Alliance has called for a pathway for reopening all industries, including metrics. While we are encouraged to see restrictions begin to loosen, our businesses still do not have clarity or insight into what their future may hold. Business owners need certainty on the next steps to reopening so they may plan. Wedding and banquet venues, and funeral homes, while providing varied services, can only operate with 25 people indoors.

We are now one year into the pandemic, and wedding and banquet venues that have been able to survive are still unable to operate at a viable level, despite continuing to incur expenses. We have one business member who pays \$156,000 in rent annually for their event space and cannot yet earn revenue to offset the cost. Another traditionally successful northern Michigan wedding venue, which annually brings over 25,000 wedding guests to its community, has essentially gone dark. Our entire communities are affected when these venues aren't able to operate – not only because we're no longer welcoming visitors –because these job providers have had to change their staffing.

Funeral homes have been limited in their ability to comfort grieving families with the current gathering limits, despite their ability to socially distance attendees. One business member shared they have 50 families waiting for the restrictions to loosen, so they don't have to select their "top 25" to attend the funeral. This industry also deserves distinction in any epidemic restrictions, as attendees can remain masked for the entire duration of a funeral.

On behalf of our member businesses, the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance requests a pathway to reopening all industries and more reasonable restrictions based on a capacity formula and other accepted standards similar to other industries.

Sincerely,



Stacie Bytwork, Chairperson
Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance



Sarah Hagen, Vice-Chairperson
Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance