

March 10, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer, Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

### **RE: Potential Aid for Industries Impacted by Coronavirus**

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy and Schumer:

On behalf of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), which represents more than 48,000 association professionals nationwide, I write regarding prospective federal intervention to support the airline, travel and other targeted industries impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic. **ASAE urges you to also include associations, nonprofits and other tax-exempt organizations within any federal aid packages or supplemental appropriations measures**, as many have been and will be harmed by event cancellations and reduced meeting attendance as a result of COVID-19.

As the largest organization to represent trade and professional associations, part of ASAE's mission is to advocate legislative, regulatory and legal issues that directly or potentially impact the broad association, nonprofit and tax-exempt communities. This includes, travel, tourism and conferences, with which associations and other Section 501(c) organizations play a major role.

According to the Events Industry Council's 2018 Economic Significant Study conducted by Oxford Economics<sup>1</sup>, more than 1.9 million meetings occur in the United States each year – with more than 250 million attendees. These meetings contribute more than \$446 billion to U.S. gross domestic product and directly support 5.9 million jobs nationwide.

As you are no doubt aware, the fast-spreading COVID-19 epidemic has prompted the cancellation of dozens of major meetings and events in the U.S. and forced other event sponsors to consider cancelling or postponing innumerable other events dependent on in-person attendance at convention centers, hotels and other event facilities. Many of these meetings and events also attract international participants, who generate 11.5 percent (about \$38 billion) of direct spending during their visits to the U.S. International travel to the U.S. has dropped sharply

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<sup>1</sup> Events Industry Council. Economic Significance of Meetings to the US Economy. February 2018. <https://dev-meetingsmeanbusiness.pantheonsite.io/sites/default/files/Economic%20Significance%20of%20Meetings%20to%20the%20US%20Economy.pdf>

during the COVID-19 outbreak and signs point to this trend growing until the virus is brought under control. The U.S. Travel Association forecasts international flights to the U.S. will plummet six percent over the next three months alone, which would be the largest decline since the 2008 economic crisis.

ASAE is doing its best to provide the association and nonprofit communities with resources and advice to mitigate losses with hotel and vendor contracts and insurance options if conferences, trade shows or other in-person events must be cancelled or attendance is greatly diminished. Notwithstanding, meetings are the lifeblood for many associations, and tax credits or other federal assistance are greatly needed to protect associations' limited revenue streams and ensure Section 501(c) organizations can continue to fulfill their important missions in public service.

Additionally, many associations operate similarly to small businesses and are greatly impacted if employees are forced to take sick leave or are quarantined as a result of COVID-19 interaction. We are aware the Trump Administration and Congress are considering measures for small businesses that may require cash flow assistance amid the outbreak, and **urge that tax-exempt entities be included in any temporary aid designed to stem the economic fallout resulting from COVID-19.**

Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions regarding ASAE or its request for critically-needed assistance to the association and nonprofit sectors, please contact Mary Kate Cunningham, CAE, vice president of public policy, at [mcunningham@asaecenter.org](mailto:mcunningham@asaecenter.org) or 202-626-2787.

Sincerely,



Susan Robertson, CAE  
President and CEO

CC:

The Honorable Richard Neal, Chairman  
United States House of Representatives Committee on Ways & Means  
1102 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady, Ranking Member  
United States House of Representatives Committee on Ways & Means  
1102 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Chairman  
United States Senate Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ron Wyden, Ranking Member  
United States Senate Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey, Chairwoman  
United States House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations  
H-307 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member  
United States House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations  
H-307 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman  
United States Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S-128 the Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman  
United States Senate Committee on Appropriations  
S-128 the Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20510