



ORANGE COUNTY MAYOR

**Jerry L. Demings**



Dear Hoteliers:

I am writing to provide you with an update on our efforts to keep our economy churning as we respond to and recover from the global COVID-19 pandemic. We can all agree the pandemic has had a major impact on the hotel and hospitality industries. I thank you for your perseverance and extraordinary efforts as we all work together toward economic recovery.

While we are currently under a State of Local Emergency, we remain safely open for business in Orange County. The Orange County Convention Center continues to be one of the safest and busiest venues to hold a meeting and will host 40 events with approximately 359,000 attendees from October to December 2021. As we look ahead, the Convention Center has already booked 125 events for 2021-22 with an estimated 1.5 million attendees and a \$3.1 billion impact.

Clearly Orange County has gained the confidence of some of the largest trade shows in the country, and there is an expectation by convention organizers that we will take whatever steps necessary to ensure the wellbeing of the public. The local State of Emergency I issued is a means to do just that — ensure public safety.

The Declaration of State of Local Emergency enables the Orange County Mayor, acting as the Director of Emergency Management, to waive formalities for Orange County government otherwise required by law. It allows the Mayor to do such things as employ workers or acquire and distribute supplies and materials; redefine operations within County facilities to include the assignment of staff to COVID-19 testing and inoculation sites; put policies in place to require employees to be vaccinated; and take additional actions without going through the normal process of obtaining authorization from the Board of County Commissioners. This authority allows the County to adjust to emerging and unpredictable trends in the pandemic in a timely manner.

The declaration does NOT give businesses the right to cancel or break contracts due to force majeure claims pursuant to lawful contractual agreements, as one has nothing to do with the other. The declaration only ensures proactive steps can be implemented immediately to address circumstances that may affect the health, safety and welfare of residents and visitors in Orange County.

Like the rest of our nation, Orange County has struggled with the effects of COVID-19. However, it is important to note many of the steps we have taken locally should reassure guests their safety is our top priority. I am highlighting the important measures the County has taken since the start of the pandemic:

- Vaccinated 71% of residents 12+ with one or more doses
- Conducted more than 456,651 Covid-19 tests to date for residents and visitors
- Directed nearly 11,000 safety inspections by the Business Compliance or "Strike" teams
- Received the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) STAR accreditation — the gold standard of safe venues — at the Orange County Convention Center

As Mayor, I have delivered more than 155 Covid-19 news conferences since March 2020 to keep our citizens educated and provide transparency to the media. Generally, Orange County has remained open for business throughout the pandemic and does not intend to slow down. In July 2021, our Tourist Development Tax collection was \$24.7 million dollars, up \$3 million over the prior month. July 2021 recorded the highest TDT receipts for any month of July since the inception of collections, which dates back more than three decades.

The good news is our 14-day rolling positivity rate for new coronavirus cases has been declining for the past few weeks. The Florida Department of Health reports the rate of transmission likely peaked with the most recent surge in new infections in Orange County. We instituted proven safety procedures for residents and visitors and stand ready for even greater success in the days to come.

Please share this news with your clients and tell them what we are doing to make their visit and experience a safe and memorable occasion for them.

Sincerely,

Jerry L. Demings  
Orange County Mayor