

Media Release

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California Needs to Reopen Meetings Industry

On March 23, 2021 San Mateo County/Silicon Convention and Visitor's Bureau President and CEO, John Hutar, will provide the County's Board of Supervisors an update on the State of the Travel Industry. "I'm flattered to be invited and give our county leaders an update. The Board and County Staff have provided extraordinary leadership guiding San Mateo County to be the first Bay Area County and only 4th county in the state to advance to the Orange Tier. The time has now come for the state of California to reopen the meetings industry. By remaining closed, the state is turning away \$4B in revenue per month!" said Hutar.

COVID has ravaged San Mateo County's travel industry causing a nearly 80% decrease in revenues since the pandemic started. While San Mateo County is filled with many open spaces and outdoor attractions that appeal to the leisure traveler, there simply isn't enough Leisure Business to compensate for the losses in the Corporate, International and Meeting segments. The issues hampering the restart of International and Corporate segments could take years to resolve. The Meetings segment is actually quite easy to restart – California is currently the only state that does not allow meetings or has no plan to restart them! Statewide, 518,000 jobs in the tourism sector were lost because of COVID which translates to 25,000 jobs lost in San Mateo County.

At the onset of the pandemic, Meetings Planners understood the need to postpone their programs to 2021. With California now being the only state closed for meetings, states like Arizona, Texas and Florida are picking up California's cancellations. As a start, Hutar wants to see the Meetings Industry included in the state's reopening plan with a guideline similar to that of Movie Theaters (50% of capacity or 200 persons max in Orange Tier).

Hotels and venues have developed sanitation standards partnering with well-respected institutions such as the Mayo Clinic, Lysol and Clorox. The Meetings Industry is worth \$4.1B per month to the state of California. The lead time for booking these events can 1-3 months or as long as 1-2 years. Once business leaves, it's very hard to bring it back as newly selected destination can quickly become a "go to" destination in the minds of event planner. Companies who operate properties in open states are executing meetings in a safe manner and achieving record revenues. Hutar sees no reason why California is unwilling to open up the Meetings sector, or at least engage in dialogue to developing reopening criteria. "Today, we have properties that could host 200 people in their restaurant, while their adjacent meeting space is forced to remain idle. The time has come for California to open this important sector of our economy!" said Hutar.

For more information on travel updates in San Mateo County, please visit our [Welcome Back](#) page. For questions, please contact John Hutar at john@visitsmcsv.com.

About San Mateo County/Silicon Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau

The [San Mateo County/Silicon Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau](#) is a destination sales and marketing organization. The organization's objective is to attract meetings, conventions, business, and individual travelers, thereby enhancing the economic growth in San Mateo County, CA.

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