

Dear Room Tax Commission,

My name is Estefania and I work at North Central Group, a hospitality management and development company. I am writing to urge you to support the City's room tax investment into Destination Madison to the fullest extent possible. Thousands of our community's residents, my business and my workforce have suffered and likely will continue to suffer extensive economic hardships because of the COVID-19 crisis.

Destination Madison's past efforts have made our businesses and those working for us thrive. Their work in securing conventions, sporting events and attracting visitors have been excellent and ensuring they can continue this work for our future is critical. They are the one entity that the city invests room tax in that can help stabilize the hospitality industry and lead the long-term economic recovery for our community.

COVID-19 has highly impacted the hospitality industry not just in Madison, but nationwide. Our owned and managed properties have taken a significant hit already and without the help of Destination Madison, it would take an extremely long time to recover; that's if we ever really do. More than 75% of our hourly and salaried team members have been furloughed and are now without work. Some of our properties have closed down and the few that are operating have a hard time reaching an occupancy that can continue to support those that are working. Because of such a low occupancy level, much of our staff has been working on reduced hours/pay. This again affects the way of life for many people now needing to make ends meet with reduced income. All in all, every person and family have been effected and will continue to be effected without the support of Destination Madison.

With organizations like Destination Madison, it will create opportunities and hope for those effected by providing jobs and chance to get their lives back on track. Destination Madison will bring business that is essential to the hospitality industry. With groups, celebrations, events and meetings beginning to fill hotels, it will also in turn strengthen the economy. With added occupancy, it will mean we can bring back our furloughed team members that are struggling. We want to be able to be a team again.

Visitors make our lives in Madison better. Our local population cannot support all of our locally owned and operated businesses - downtown and elsewhere - and, many would be empty during the year if it weren't for visitors. And, our neighborhoods would lose their personality - and identities - if it weren't for the money that comes into our community from visitors.

Please help Madison recover by making sure Destination Madison has the financial means to fulfill its mission. We need Destination Madison to tell visitors our community is a welcoming place and to help them safely experience all our community, and businesses, have to offer.

With hospitality,

Estefania Solache Alvarez

CITY OF MADISON RESIDENT