

06/02/2020

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your work and service to our state: I imagine it has been very difficult in this changing time. We are grateful for the assistance that is being considered for small businesses in the hospitality industry, the odds are definitely against us and we are grateful for any support we can get right now. I am reaching out today to ask for your attention and hopefully your assistance regarding the event rental companies in Vermont. While they are an integral part of our industry, they are not being included in any assistance plans.

To bring you into our reality for a moment, my catering company has been decimated by the pandemic. In looking at weddings alone, we were scheduled to do 26 weddings this year and are currently down to possibly having three. Those few who are trying to keep their 2020 date are dropping from 200+ guests down to 10-30, depending on what guidelines are in place at the time of their wedding. The corporate events and family gatherings have followed suit, 90% of our business for this year is gone. Needless to say, it is going to be a challenge to get through the next two years. The Tent and Rental companies are directly tied to these numbers. Every event that **each** catering company loses, is an event that they lose as well.

The catering industry is just one sector of the industries that are supported by the event rental companies in this state. Without the tent and event companies, our festivals, outside graduations, community, political and sporting events are left without the companies that set these events into motion. It would be sad enough to lose great companies that employ many Vermonters but we also cannot afford to lose the tourism dollars and tax revenues that are tied to all of these events. The rental and event companies are an integral part of our success and it won't be possible to work to the same scale without them. If my small company doesn't have these rental companies, we will surely lose our out of state clientele who are looking to create a big, beautiful Vermont wedding. The ripple effect goes out from there and ultimately affects those of you who are reading this letter. Vermont is always one of the top wedding destinations in the country; people love the Vermont experience so we need your help to keep these companies intact so we can continue to keep bringing people into this state for weddings, tourism and events.

I appreciate your time and help.

Sincerely,

Liane Mendez