

# CARES 2.0 OP-ED TEMPLATE

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[STATE] jobs are in danger. A busy summer travel season has typically employed thousands in our state, but this year's new reality has put many out of work. With restrictions in place and understandable traveler concerns, the summer season has not been at its usual levels, even while travel businesses and employees take safety precautions and implement new health and safety protocols.

As a [DMO/CVB/Chamber] representing the travel industry, its many small businesses and workforce, our responsibility is promoting our community to visitors and businesses alike. We are experiencing this reality firsthand, while we urgently prepare for travel's safe return so our local restaurants, hotels, and attractions can get back up and running.

In order to do that effectively, we need Congress to help save the travel industry. The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) is a critical lifeline for small businesses throughout the country to keep their doors open and people employed. Up until recently, destination marketing organizations have been excluded from its benefits, though we so desperately need their support, particularly the loan forgiveness the program offers—and even though current legislation includes this provision, this relief isn't guaranteed.

Travel businesses and organizations, of which 83% are small businesses, have experienced an unprecedented contraction due to coronavirus. More than one-third of the travel industry's 15.8 million jobs (34%) have been lost since March. Travel spending is on pace to decline by over \$500 billion this year, with a total negative impact to the U.S. economy of over \$1.2 trillion dollars.

At the [NAME], our role is to promote this region to attract visitors and business travelers who will support our local businesses—from our award-winning restaurants and breweries to our hotels and meetings and events spaces. Through our work and up until the onset of the pandemic, our promotional and economic development campaigns placed a spotlight on [insert examples of campaigns].

However, as an entity reliant upon tourism revenues, we have made difficult decisions to stay afloat, while continuing to share critical information and encouraging our communities and visitors to exercise preventive health and safety measures—like wearing masks, maintaining safe distances and washing hands regularly. We also take every chance to remind everyone that this rich, vibrant region will be ready once travel can pick back up.

Access to PPP funding would tremendously assist our resiliency and continuity. We are no different from any other PPP recipient—except our incorporation as a [quasi-public entity or 501c6 organization]. This specific distinction has so far precluded our participation in the PPP, placing our survival at risk.

Luckily, the solution is easy and well within reach. The U.S. Senate's latest relief and stimulus bill, the HEALS Act, which builds upon the good work of the HEROES Act introduced by the U.S. House, supports the expansion of PPPs to include DMOs. We applaud Senate leadership for including these provisions in their opening legislative statement, and we implore Senators **NAME** and **NAME** to ensure these measures are nonnegotiable and included in the final package that passes through both chambers.

The stakes are high right now for the overall health of our economy and our workforce—particularly in **[STATE]**. And as one of the primary drivers of economic benefits to our community through our efforts to attract visitors, we want to be in the position to do exactly that as soon as possible. Expansion of PPP for our organizations, both here in our state and nationwide, will enable us to dramatically contribute to the rebuilding of our economy, as we safely reopen our country and welcome visitors to experience all **[STATE]** has to offer.