**Safe Meetings Media Event to Restore Illinois**

 **1. Goals & Objectives of the Program**To advocate for our hotel members is one of the pillars for our Illinois Hotel and Lodging Association (IHLA). As the Covid-19 pandemic affected our industry, the reopening guidance put forth by the state and local governments throughout Illinois impacted the group travel market the greatest, putting forth strict guidance for meetings and events resulting in a loss for many hotels tallying up to 65% of their revenues.

IHLA’s top policy priority remains to convince Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Public Health that meetings and events can be held safely in our hotels and convention centers in a greater capacity rather than the current cap of 50 people total.

 **2. Target Audience & How the Program was Presented**In June, IHLA worked with Democratic legislative leaders including Assistant Majority Leader Fred Crespo who led the charge to put pressure on the Governor to make this change. On June 15, he sent a letter (attached) that was written by IHLA to Governor Pritzker and continued working with other legislators throughout the state to increase the pressure from the legislative side.

However, it was evident that the Governor was not going to be swayed by legislative action or inside baseball and we decided we needed to promote our position publicly, in the press. On June 15, IHLA invited Chicago media to the LondonHouse Hotel, to showcase how a meeting in their ballroom could safely and responsibly be held using a 50% capacity limit rather than a flat cap of 50 people. We highlighted the multiple protocols that were included in IHLA’s Clean + Safe Guidance as well as Hilton’s updated brand guidelines. This event was well-attended by media and generated coverage from every one of the Chicago television networks, multiple print publications and was picked up by the AP for nationwide publication.

 **3. Results of the Program**
Upon the conclusion of the media availability, we packaged the press clips and sent it to key elected officials in the Governor’s Office, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Department of Public Health and the legislature, to reiterate our request to adjust these guidelines. The conversations and negotiations that resulted from this press coverage was more than we had experienced since the beginning of Covid and it was a direct result of the PR that we were able to generate.

**4.** **Evaluation Measures**IHLA continues to use these opportunities to increase the public pressure on the Governor to change his stance, and educate the public about the phenomenal steps that the hotel industry has taken to protect our employees and guests, especially when hotels can implement so many more safety and social distancing protocols than other industries are able to do. The easing of these restrictions is critical to the short and long-term recovery of our industry and the state’s economy.
 **5. How the Program was Presented (see #2.)**

**6. Additional Information: MEDIA COVERAGE**06/15/20            Crain’s Chicago Business: “Hotel group leans on Pritzker to allow bigger meetings”
<https://www.chicagobusiness.com/greg-hinz-politics/hotel-group-leans-pritzker-allow-bigger-meetings>

06/15/20            Chicago Tribune: “Gov. J.B. Pritzker cool to hotel industry’s push for larger gatherings in next phase of reopening”
<https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-coronavirus-illinois-hotels-pritzker-20200615-jqup6a65irekjdguyi45m3xyne-story.html>

06/15/20            NBC 5 Chicago: “Hotels Plan For Phase 4 Reopening with New Safety Guidelines” <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/hotels-plan-for-phase-4-reopening-with-new-safety-guidelines/2290161/>

06/15/20            WLS-TV: “Many Chicago hotels may choose to remain closed, calling for capacity increases in Phase 4”
<https://abc7chicago.com/illinois-hotel-chicago-london-house-coronavirus/6249175/>

06/15/20            WBBM-TV (CBS Chicago): “Chicago Hotels Get Ready For More People, But Governor Pritzker Isn’t So Sure”
<https://chicago.cbslocal.com/2020/06/15/chicago-hotels-get-ready-for-more-people-but-governor-pritzker-isnt-so-sure/>

06/15/20            WFLD-TV: “Hotels Ask Pritzker to Relax Rules” <https://www.fox32chicago.com/news/hotel-industry-pushing-pritzker-to-allow-reopening-of-ballrooms-conference-rooms>

06/15/20            KFVS-TV: “Ill. proposal to have 50 percent capacity at events in Phase 4 of reopening”
<https://www.kfvs12.com/2020/06/15/ill-proposal-have-percent-capacity-events-phase-reopening/>

06/15/20            WSIL-TV: “Hotel Association Pressures Pritzker on Reopening”
<https://wsiltv.com/2020/06/16/hotel-industry-unveils-new-procedures-to-safely-increase-occupancy-limits-for-meeting-rooms-ballrooms/> and Clip Attached

06/15/20            WREX-TV: “Hotel Industry Pushes Pritzker on Reopening Plan”
<https://wrex.com/2020/06/15/hotel-industry-unveils-new-procedures-to-safely-increase-occupancy-limits-for-meeting-rooms-ballrooms/>