

Dear Mayor Adler, Mayor Pro Tem Garza, and Council Members,

Thank you for all of your hard work and consideration during this unfolding crisis. Those of us in the Austin music family wish for your clarity and resiliency while you usher our city through this uncertainty. We hold you and your loved ones in our thoughts.

Today, the purpose of our letter is to share our strong support for the COVID-19 Economic Resilience Resolution, posted as Item #91 on the agenda for the March 26, 2020 City Council Meeting. During this time of mandatory closures, those who live on and through music are without income and without answers on when that is likely to change. We are sympathetic to all Austinites who share this frightening circumstance.

As you consider the needs of all workers and industries, we ask for help with two things:

- Individual Assistance: Musicians, production staff, and venue employees will need help maintaining access to food and healthcare. Signed to this letter are several organizations that have been providing these services, and will need the City's help to continue doing so. Once a vote on the resolution has been taken, these organizations are on standby and are ready to deliver specific economic data on what they need. Most musicians, and many live music support workers, are 1099 contractors. This means that under the current rules, they will not qualify for TWC benefits. This is a serious emergency and we need help addressing it.
- Small Business Relief: At this time, the only assistance available to music venues are SBA loans. We are closely following Congress' decisions to see if SBA will be forgiving the portion of a loan spent directly on payroll. In the meantime, venue owners, many of whom have invested their entire family's savings into these small businesses and feel ownership of the well-being of their staff and the musicians they hire, are making minute to minute decisions on whether to lay workers off, wait to see what help is on the way, or to close permanently. Many are laying off workers now, and helping them apply for unemployment benefits, with the hope that they will be able to rehire. Some are ambivalent about applying for a loan given their unknown futures.

As you consider these circumstances, please include timeliness and efficiency. We need one source, rather than being referred to multiple possible programs to apply for. We need low to no cost relief, rather than loans. We need clear communication on when to rely on relief, and we hope the City will be able to help more immediately while the state and federal government figure out what they are going to do.

Austin's music community has long been one of the backbones of this city. Not only does this creative sector supply the heart and soul of Austin, it also is a major driver of our economy. You all already know this. What we are asking you to remember is now is the time to protect this precious resource to our City. Not only has the music industry been involved in driving billions

to our economy but these same folks who most of the time live in a very fragile ecosystem, are the first ones that this community turns to in every crisis, every cause, every celebration; usually asking them to play for free, donate their venue and services etc. And every time this music community jumps on board to support others. Now is the time to ensure that we are not only providing real economic resources to our music community, but that when this is all over, there will still be a music community here in Austin. When this ends, and it will end, we need to ensure that we have not lost our heart and soul and leave a major gaping hole in driving our economic engine. No one wants to live in an Austin without music.

We are extraordinarily grateful for your outreach to our community, and for hearing our concerns. As always, our mission is to be good neighbors and we are here to support you in arriving at the greatest good for all of Austin.

Very Best Regards,

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