



April 17, 2020

The Honorable LaToya Cantrell
Mayor, City of New Orleans
New Orleans City Hall
1300 Perdido Street, 2nd Floor
New Orleans, LA 70112

Dear Mayor,

On behalf of the nearly 1,000 members of the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to ask you to please communicate and collaborate with your regional partners in advance as we work through this ongoing viral pandemic as a region.

This letter finds us all in uncharted territory. I can only imagine the burden you are carrying as mayor of a major city. But I am also keenly aware that your opinions, views, and policies impact on our entire region. We are all working in our own ways to accelerate recovery and return to prosperity. Our region would benefit by more collective thinking that could be led by our economic hub, the City of New Orleans. But that will require you to improve your communication and collaboration with neighboring parishes.

Your media conference on Tuesday, April 14 was not in the spirit of cooperation. Your surprising decision to offer an opinion on the fate of future festivals and events have far-reaching and damaging consequences. Because you are the mayor of one of America's greatest cities, your words have already echoed across the world. This surprise announcement left many unprepared, and it likely set back our recovery in several critical sectors by weeks if not months. Leaders of various industries throughout your city and our region have indicated to me that your comments have already started a ripple-effect that is leading to the cancellation of fourth quarter business. I was surprised to learn that your opinions on resuming an NFL schedule in 2020 were made without ever communicating with New Orleans Saints owner Gayle Benson or anyone of her advisors. It seems implausible that the elected leader of any major city would announce ideas or intentions without exhaustive deliberation and communication with key stakeholders.

Mayor, it is risky to prognosticate months in advance because each day brings rapid changes. Testing that once took eight to thirteen days is now available within hours. China has begun shutting down emergency temporary hospitals as new cases dwindle. Ten scientific researchers from the Dutch Erasmus Medical Center in the Netherlands discovered an antibody that fends off the COVID-19 infection, and that could speed antiviral medication for the world. My point is that none of us really know where this pandemic will lead, and it is impulsive for decisions or even suggestions to be made arbitrarily.

My request to you is direct. Please communicate and collaborate with your fellow colleagues in neighboring parishes before making statements that could impact the entire region. Please rely on expert advice from business and industry leaders regarding attitudes, expectations and requirements that will play into our complete recovery. Please lead deliberately offering well-considered strategies that have been measured by all who are impacted. We cannot endure capricious decision making, nor can we tolerate whimsical reaction.

I am respectful of your authority, and I am hopeful that you will lead this region to a robust recovery. I hope you will accept this letter in the spirit it is intended. We all want what is best for our communities. I trust you understand the magnitude of your words, ideas, and actions. If you believe I can assist you in any way, I stand ready to offer my support. Wishing you better days ahead, I remain

Respectfully,



Todd P. Murphy
President