April 20, 2020

Representative Name

House of Representatives

District

City/Town

Dear M

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to you on behalf of The Rhode Island Coalition of Wedding Vendors. We are currently at 444 members. Like all business owners in Rhode Island, we are struggling, but COVID-19 has had a unique impact on our industry. We want to ensure that the concerns of our industry are prioritized in the state’s plan to bring back tourism moving forward.

Rhode Island weddings bring in significant revenue to our state:

* **Last year, there were 6,615 weddings in Rhode Island (RI) and the average couple spent $30,029—higher than the national average of $24,675—on their wedding.**
* **In 2019, couples spent $198,641,835 directly on weddings in RI, with the wedding industry as a whole generating over $60 billion annually in the US.**
* **When you factor in meals, lodging, transportation, and every other cost associated with out-of-state guests attending a wedding in RI, this amount is multiplied considerably.**
* **The $198,641,835 figure does not include what the couples or their guests spent at other RI businesses during their visit, nor the amount of money RI couples spend in RI in preparation for their weddings, from bridal showers, engagement parties, bachelor and bachelorette parties, and more.**

However, due to the COVID-19 close-contact and group size restrictions, the majority of 2020 weddings have been postponed, cancelled, or will be postponed or cancelled soon. This has an adverse effect both on the economy and the livelihoods of those who own companies that provide wedding goods and/or services, as well as on our employees/subcontractors.

***We are unable to work from home.***

Unlike some other businesses, we are unable to do the bulk of our work from home, as weddings cannot be held at our homes. For many of us, we can’t pivot because the goods and/or services we offer are specifically for weddings.

***We do not qualify for small business loans currently available.***

Many of us don't qualify for the small business loans currently available or if we do, we have received only a small percentage of what we would have typically earned. While PPP funds are already depleted, those of us who were fortunate to get a PPP loan, in order for it to be forgiven, know at least 75% of it has to be used for payroll within eight weeks of receiving the loan. However, this isn’t entirely possible in our industry as many of us use Independent Contractors or seasonal employees, and as such will have no payroll for the next eight weeks due to wedding postponements and cancellations.

***Unemployment does not cover expenses already accrued or provide enough for us to pay ourselves.***

Some of us are able to receive unemployment, but even with that, we are not making anything close to what we need to cover our expenses and pay ourselves.

The timeline for weddings in the wake of COVID-19 is unique in that in most cases, couples need to make the call on postponing or cancelling their wedding months in advance. For wedding vendors, that means that our work for one to three months from now (even longer in some cases) is being postponed or cancelled. As of this writing, we are all experiencing a loss of wedding season work that began in March and is affecting wedding bookings through as late as October for some businesses. Even if restrictions were lifted and we were able to start doing weddings again in June, most—if not all—of our clients would have already rescheduled or cancelled their June, July, August and potentially September weddings.

***We are not only losing 2020 income, we are losing 2021 income as well.***

Furthermore, many 2020 couples have moved their weddings to 2021. So not only do we take the loss for their original wedding date, but when they move to a 2021 date, we are unable to take new work for that date that we otherwise would have been able to take. In that way, it is a double loss for us. The wedding industry is unique in that the impact of COVID-19 has affected both our 2020 and our 2021 income.

***Our 2020 and 2021 income hit is a direct hit to the RI tourism industry, too.***

Wedding parties and wedding guests are often in town for two - four days, spending money on hotel stays, dining, shopping, tours, going to bars, etc. In areas where weddings are popular, a significant number of businesses—and therefore the city or town—benefit from weddings.

There are a plethora of businesses---venues, florists, caterers, planners, beauty professionals, photographers, officiants, DJs, videographers, etc.--who make a living primarily off of weddings. Not only are we losing months of work rendering us unable to pay all of our bills and support our families, but the cities and towns that would have hosted those weddings are losing revenue as well.

***Please consider our unique situation in designing emergency assistance to affected workers.***

As a plan is made for Rhode Island to re-open and as further funds become available for emergency assistance, we ask that you take our unique situation into consideration and that you request Governor Gina Raimondo do the same. We want to go back to work as soon as it is safely possible, but we will be unable to if we are forced out of business in the meantime. We have built our businesses, paid our taxes, and work with hundreds of wonderfully talented professionals. We are proud to call Rhode Island home and to contribute to the economy. We need help in the midst of this crisis to protect our livelihood. Thank you for your time and consideration with this matter.

Sincerely,

Allison Barbera, on behalf of The Rhode Island Coalition of Wedding Vendors

Owner, Allison Barbera Beauty LLC

P.O. Box 1473

Newport, RI 02840

774.696.4546

**The Rhode Island Coalition of Wedding Vendors Members**

Allison Barbera

Newport, RI

Owner, Allison Barbera Beauty LLC

Opened in 2008

Employs 18+ Independent Contractors

Sara Sheally

Exeter, RI

Owner, Sara Zarrella Photography LLC & Owner, Rock Your Booth

Opened 2003 & Opened 2011

Employs 2 full time employees and 4 Independent Contractors & Employs 9 Independent Contractors

Aldo Segama

Cranston, RI

Owner, Aldo’s House of Formals

Opened in 2011

Employs 3 employees/Independent Contractors

Erica Trombetti

Cranston, RI

Owner, Infinite Events, LLC

Opened in 2009

Employs 3+ Independent Contractors

Michael Picard  
Cumberland, RI  
Owner, Mike Picard Motion Pictures  
Opened in 2001  
Employs 9+ Independent Contractors

Kathryn McLaughlin & Sarah Heaney  
Newport, RI & Middletown, RI   
Co-Owners, Leila Ryan Events Inc.   
Opened in 2017  
Employs 2+ Independent Contractors

Tony Ormonde

Owner, Ormonde Productions

Employs 5 employees and 12 freelancers

Opened in 1990

Em Devaud

Newport, RI

Owner, Em Devaud Events

Opened in 2013

Sole proprietor with one employee

Mike Henriques

Owner, Artistic Wedding Films   
Employs 3 Full Time Employees and 12 Freelancers

Nicole Gesmondi

Providence, RI

Owner of Nicole Gesmondi Photographer, LLC  
Started in 2009

John Lane  
Cranston, RI  
Owner, Golden Gate Studios  
Opened in 2001  
Employs 7

Tracy Jenkins

Coventry, RI

Owner, Tracy Jenkins Photography

Opened 2016

Employs 2+ freelancers

Lisa Carlow  
Coventry, RI  
Owner Lisa Frechette Photography  
Opened in 2000  
Employs 2+ Independent Contractors

Allesandra [Butler](https://www.facebook.com/ali.lomazzo?eid=ARDtJvtiHGVWxsAL2PCn5KvizZVKmR5328yDCiwu7GvqkfYzEklVyHaRCNOp8n5cReyIis9ld1BD44qs)

Cranston, RI

Owner, Ali Lomazzo Beauty

Opened 2013

Employs 13+ Independent Contractors

Barbara Behan Howlett

Newport, RI

Owner, Newport Catering dba: Glorious Affairs

Opened 1990

Employs 30+ Full and Seasonal

Amanda J. Saccoccio   
Portsmouth, RI  
The Newport Experience - OceanCliff and Regatta Place  
Wedding Sales Manager  
Opened in 1995  
Employs <250

Susan Falso

Johnston, RI

Owner, [Cherryhill Flowers](https://www.facebook.com/cherryhillflowers?eid=ARBLfbcNAyH3EA3j2vDVmAkx389PpOfO-RmqcqSjwlJK23Y07Gr8DAhjM79ikN0eKIAdPiQLnLWpTjzj)

Opened in 2005

12 Employees

[Michaela](https://www.facebook.com/michaela.andrade.9?eid=ARB9p41peOE7ql1YXx4YIi8B9DHvFO-rnb5K1yOdrgyQCEWtiPfQ56Yeyl66mxE15CQcLCyTei7JQHm0) Andrade

North Providence, RI

Wedding & Event Coordinator, The Catering Gourmet

Opened in 2005

40+ Employees

Tiesha Cole  
North Providence, RI  
Harbor Lights, Director of Sales and Events  
Opened in 2010  
40+ employees and 5+ Independent Contractors

Tracy Hill

Mapleville, RI

Wedding & Event Coordinator Crystal Lake Golf Club-Crystal Lake Tavern

75 Employees

Opened in 2004

Danielle Haley Lefebvre   
Cumberland, RI  
Owner, Lefebvre Photo  
Opened in 2008  
Employs 5 Independent Contractors

Kim Lyn Chauvin  
North Smithfield, RI  
Owner, Kim Lyn Photography, LLC  
Opened in 2013  
Employs 5+ Independent contractors

Stephanie Frazier Grimm  
Middletown, RI  
Owner, Couture Parties  
Opened 2008  
Employs 4+ Independent Contractors

Audrey Massart-McInerney and Seth McInerney   
Hope Valley, RI   
Owners, Massart Photography   
Opened 2011  
Employs 2 & 3-6 Independent Contractors

[Karen Riley Tungett](https://www.facebook.com/karen.tungett?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDo1MzYzMDc2MDczMTIwMTlfNTM2MzQ5NzgwNjQxMTM1)

Middletown, RI

Owner, DK Catering, Blackstone Caterers

In business since 1945

Employs 180

Luke Renchan

Tiverton, RI

Owner, Luke Renchan Entertainment

Opened 1983

10 Subcontractors

Lynda Williams

Wakefield, RI  
Owner, Lynda Williams Beauty

Opened in 2007  
Employs 5 Independent Contractors

Kristin Curley Bishop  
Saunderstown RI  
Owner, WBG Fine Catering & Event Design  
Opened in 2000  
Employs 25 + Full, part time and seasonal workers

[Nicole Powaluk Boudreau](https://www.facebook.com/nicole.powalukboudreau?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDo1MzYzMDc2MDczMTIwMTlfNTM2MzE3MDM3MzExMDc2)

Newport, RI

Owner, [BellaBeauty Bridal Newport](https://www.facebook.com/BellaBeautyGirls/?hc_location=ufi)  
Opened in 2012  
3 Partners/Sole Proprietor/General Partnership

Jessica Pohl  
Portsmouth, RI  
Owner, Photography by Jessica Pohl  
Opened in 2015  
Employs 2-3 Independent Contractors

Ariana Cappalli  
Cranston, RI  
Owner, AMC Weddings  
Opened 2019  
Employs 1 and 4 Independent Contractors

Jeanne Desmarais  
Westerly, RI  
Co-owner Paper Moon Invitations  
Opened 2004  
Employs 4

Marisa Rizzo  
Greenville, RI  
Owner, Meadow Brook Inn  
Opened in 2005  
Employs 15; combination of part time, full time and seasonal workers

Michelle Kloczkowski  
Cranston, RI  
Co-owner Paper Moon Invitations  
Opened in 2004  
Employs 4

Annmarie Therriault  
Coventry, RI  
Owner Couture Bridal Co.  
Opened 2005  
Employs 1, 2-3 interns and 4 to 5 Independent Contractors

Jennifer Gullins  
Portsmouth, RI  
Senior Vice President, Peak Event Services/ Newport Tent  
Opened 1970  
Employs 900+

George Simmons Jr.  
Warren, RI  
Owner G3 Entertainment  
Opened 2004  
Sole operator

Julie Michaels  
Warwick, RI  
Sole proprietor of JDP Cake & Favors  
Opened 2008  
Employs 2 Independent Contractors

[Amanda Malfitano Verduchi](https://www.facebook.com/amanda.malfitanoverduchi?hc_location=ufi)

Lincoln,RI 02865

Owner, Image

6-12 Independent Contractor Musicians and one employee

Robin L McDonald  
Burrillville, RI  
Wedding Officiant, Heart and Soul Ceremonies  
Opened in 2005  
Independent Contractor

Sabrina Scolari

Providence, RI

Owner, Sabrina Scolari Photography

Opened in 2004

Employs 1 + Independent Contractors

James Frechette  
Pawtucket, RI  
Owner, Quality Rental  
Opened in 1969  
20+ Employees

[LisaMarie Dwyer](https://www.facebook.com/lisamarieuncutt?hc_location=ufi) & Scott Leavitt

North Kingstown, RI

Owners, Creative Ambiance Events

Opened in 1995 Hire

10+ seasonal subcontractors each year, 2 employees +4-5 Independent Contractors

Michael Marcoux  
Pawtucket, RI  
Owner, Michael Marcoux Events

Opened in 2019

Elizabeth B Rowell

Charlestown, RI

Independent Contractor/Wedding Officiant with Heart and Soul Ceremonies

Opened in 2008

John Levreault

Woonsocket, RI  
Owner, Select Sound DJ Services  
Select Photobooth  
6 employees

Julie Rose

Portsmouth, RI

Owner, Julie Rose Beauty LLC

Opened in 2014

Employs 3+ Independent Contractors

Grace Kim  
Providence, RI  
Owner, Grace Kim Floral & Event Design  
Opened 2014  
Employs 1-2 Independent Contractors

Donna Sousa

Warwick, RI

Owner, Makeover Artistry by Donna Sousa

Opened in 2008

4 Independent Contractors

Kristin Greene and Company  
East Greenwich, RI

Elizabeth Watsky Photography

West Warwick

Opened 2015

[Jennifer Neves](https://www.facebook.com/jennifer.neves.773?eid=ARCDFoRp5gx8NIlI-tvH1nBiYoXvPIZE8pB_LynylKNzBcvtC2dyw70A8SbKW1-YGQu3h9ek_UwvoWsZ)   
Bristol, RI  
Owner, Jennifer Neves Photography Inc.  
Opened in 1998  
Employs 1 + Independent Contractors

Kendall Pavan St Laurent  
Warwick, RI  
Opened in 2011 Owner, Kendall Pavan Photography  
Employs 2-3 Independent Contractors

Cole Harper  
Pawtucket, RI  
Owner, GraphiCole Photography  
Opened in 2014   
One employee

Desiree Dugan   
North Kingstown, RI   
Owner, Desiree Dugan Photography LLC  
Opened 2011  
Employs 1, 5 Independent Contractors

Sayles Livingston   
Little Compton, RI  
Owner, Sayles Livingston Design

Opened 1991  
Employ 40 people

Ann Petronio   
South Kingstown, RI   
Owner, Annie’s Escapes Custom Travel Planning  
Opened 2006  
One employee and four independent contractors

Kenneth Ferrara

Warwick, RI   
Owner, Elite Entertainment   
Opened 2007

Jamie Curci

Johnston, RI  
Owner, VideobyJamie  
Opened 2006

Marisa Bettencourt  
Cranston, RI  
Co-Owner, M.Studios Photography  
Opened 2011  
2 employees

Jerilyn A. Gagnon

Middletown, RI  
Owner, Jasmine & Geranium Boutique Florals & Event Design  
Opened in 2019

Morayo Sayles

Smithfield, RI  
Owner, Piper Brown Photography   
Opened 2014

Rebecca Miller

Providence, RI   
G Hospitality   
Established 2014

Michelle Botelho

North Kingstown  
Owner, Michelle Jeanne Floral Design   
Opened 2005

Mike Egan  
Coventry, RI

Owner, Heavenly Weddings

Luke Renchan Entertainment   
Tiverton, RI   
Opened 1983

Employs 10 Independent Contractors

Crystal Sparkman  
Lincoln, RI

Owner, Bake. Eat. Love Bakery  
Opened in 2012  
Single Operator

Samantha Fairfield  
Lincoln, RI  
Owner, Samantha Robshaw Photography  
Founded 2014

Employs 1 employee

Katie Murano  
Westerly, RI  
Owner, Katie Lovaas Photography  
Opened 2008  
Employs 4+ Independent Contractors

Aline Sarkis  
Warwick, RI

Owner, Aline Sarkis Beauty  
Est 2013

Jay Friese

Warren, RI

Owner, Signature Sounds DJ  
Opened 2011  
1 full time employee

Crystal Annear  
Cranston, RI  
Owner/Videographer, Annear Wedding Films  
Employs 2  
Opened 2015

Jennifer Luxmoore  
Providence, RI  
Sin Bakery/wedding cakes  
14 employees

Michelle Carpenter  
Greenville, RI   
Photographer  
C/O: Main Event Weddings est. 1994  
Owner: Michelle Carpenter Photography est. 2004  
Employs 12 subcontractors

Michael J Larson  
Cranston, RI

Owner, MJL Photography & Films  
Founded 2011  
Employs 10+ Independent Contractors

Bethany Steere  
Chepachet, RI  
Owner, Bethany Steere Photography  
1 employee  
Opened 2015

Grace Kim  
Providence, RI  
Owner, Grace Kim Floral & Event Design  
Opened 2014  
Employs 1-2 Independent Contractors

Joyce Holland  
Bristol, RI  
Owner, Stoneblossom Inc.  
Opened 1995  
Employs 10

Kate DeCosta

Newport, RI

Chief Operating Officer The Newport Experience

Opened 1996

Employs 200

Christine Ellingwood

Warwick, RI

Owner, Planned to Perfection

Opened in 2005

Employs 1

[Beth Ludwig](https://www.facebook.com/beth.ludwig.77?eid=ARDX_Dsh18n6qmDscea0KNQIQ7r6pkFgsv9nFqxMYCYPiEv3tUHLXABWZksMJSqqv50IXwLhfGOyVZKe)

Owner, Beth Ludwig Photography

Saunderstown, RI

Opened 1990

Employs 2 plus 5 Independent Contractors

Stefy Hilmer

Tiverton, RI

Owner/Photographer, Stefy Hilmer Photography, LLC

Opened in 2013

Employs 2 Independent Contractors

John Bellagamba  
Newport, RI  
DJ Bells

Opened 1984

Robin L McDonald, Rev

Burrillville, RI  
Wedding Officiant, Heart and Soul Ceremonies  
Est 2005

Elizabeth B Rowell

Charlestown, RI

Minister at Heart and Soul Ceremonies

Joined 2008

[Danielle McCarthy](https://www.facebook.com/d.mccarthy.elshant?eid=ARCzaoSrffYqhlK6HOEJMJ1xiUCog2-RwXSI1dWDxji9ox9HC7KYV3Ic50z5fn9asV6wAu7ss1aEk4c5) & [Ellen PJ Kelly](https://www.facebook.com/ellenpjkelly?eid=ARC7h7diT-yzV9Wabk_nNGYJrc0MHDwfIW5VFOf4b5rve9Qvj9vp8iRIe5B8rH7FlE28QKtUXqjuYFTc)  
Newport, RI & Middletown, RI   
Co-Owners, Champagne and Ink   
Opened in 2014  
Employs 2+ Independent Contractors

[D](https://www.facebook.com/jennifer.gullins?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDo1MzYzMDc2MDczMTIwMTlfNTM2MzI0MzYzOTc3MDEw)avid Price  
Tiverton, RI  
Sr Director, Peak Event Services/Newport Tent  
Opened 1970  
Employs 900+

[Hilary Block](https://www.facebook.com/hilaryblock?eid=ARBbePKOL6YkIVN_61cjTystyNZ7CB7Ws0tURF6fLEjXJAMMquTTakkSQC8gqXq72_7tu6wAyBUnP35a) Couturier

Newport, RI

Owner, [Hilary B. Photography](https://www.facebook.com/HilaryBPhotography/?eid=ARBq_M8qByHNo3gl6zF42qXpzmBgdB12bC7O8Zw2rQqzaJsBtIhoUqzLxeV3-FcEt058T7-F83qz4Yzm)

Established in RI in 2009

Employs 5+ Independent Contractors

Ra-Mu Al-mahdi

Greenville, RI

Owner of Ra-Mu and the Crew

Opened 2000

Keith Plante  
Owner, RI Wedding Services

Opened in 2007  
1 full time employee plus 2 Independent Contractors

Jenna McElroy

North Kingstown, RI  
Owner, Makeup By Jenna  
Opened 2015  
1 employee plus 4 Independent Contractors

Briget D’Antonio & Corilyn Henault  
Warwick, RI

Owners of Anchor Productions, LLC  
Established LLC in 2017

Katie Wilkinson  
Portsmouth, RI  
Resident and Sales Manager, Glen Manor House  
Opened 1975

[Rick Lataille](https://www.facebook.com/rick.lataille?hc_location=ufi)

North Smithfield, RI

Owner of Arpeggio Wedding Entertainment,

Opened in 2000

10 Employees

Elizabeth Silver  
Warwick, RI  
Sales and Events Manager, Emery’s Catering  
Established in 1970  
Employs approx. 25 full time and 50 part time/seasonal