

The Honorable Senator Melanie Scheible
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
Dear Senator Scheible;

On behalf of the Las Vegas Wedding Chamber of Commerce, Wedding Chapels, Officials and Wedding Industry Members in Clark County, we respectfully submit to you our opposition to the bill SB-177 currently pending before your committee with regard to an increase in Marriage License Fees.

For the record, we are not in any way opposed to additional state funding to help individuals who would be assisted by the passage of this legislation. However, we feel that an increase in fees would have a significant adverse impact upon the Wedding Industry. We have not opposed and in fact have supported previous increases in marriage license fees to help to fund this worthy cause.

Be that as it may, at this particular time we feel that an increase may not provide the revenue projected. The industry has been in a steady decline for 20 years and experienced a 23-percent decrease last year due to COVID. Since weddings are the only existing source of state funding for domestic violence prevention programs, a continued decline in weddings will result in a continued decline in domestic violence prevention funds. Diversifying funding sources would stabilize funding for these critical services.

This significant price increase to wedding licenses will inevitably garner national, and potentially international press. (The 2017 pop-up marriage license bureau at the airport resulted in \$15 million in national and international press.) Becoming one of the most expensive marriage licenses in the nation, will also add to the increasing perception that we are "too expensive" and thus potentially accelerate our decline.

The Wedding Chamber of Commerce has been working diligently with the Clark County Clerk to reverse this trend. We see a potential turnaround in FY2021; this price increase might further delay this recovery, perhaps to a point where this is no recovery. Preserving and rebuilding our industry is the best way to ensure that wedding licenses continue to be a significant source of revenue for domestic violence prevention programs. If we can double our weddings, we double funds for domestic violence prevention while providing income to thousands of constituents who depend upon weddings for their living.

Many in the wedding industry have been devastated by the economic impact of COVID-19. Many businesses and chapels have closed. The Governor's closure of our businesses for almost three months, the phased schedule for reopening, and the lowered capacity mean that our businesses in the wedding industry are still scrambling to survive.

We welcome the opportunity to express our support for additional funding for these key programs. Placing \$1 on every motor vehicle registration would protect our industry while providing equivalent funding for domestic violence prevention. In fact, during the shutdown we reached out to the domestic violence prevention leaders to offer help to create a promotion that might replace lost revenue.

Please consider using a different funding source rather than weddings. We are proud of our current contributions to domestic violence prevention, but this would make Nevada marriage license fees among the highest in the nation and certainly accelerate the decline in wedding tourism to Las Vegas, impacting hundreds of small wedding businesses and thousands of individuals who, all day every day, work in our iconic wedding industry and whose well-being hinges upon its ongoing health.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this regard.

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