April 18, 2016

The Honorable Phil Bryant
Mississippi Office of the Governor
550 High St,
Jackson, MS 39201

Dear Governor Bryant,

As members of the convention and meetings industry, we write with great disappointment that House Bill 1523 continues to stand without repeal.

The convention and meetings industry brings together attendees, of all skin color, sexual orientation and gender identity, in destinations around the world every single day. Those attendees come together to learn from each other, to hear each other's perspectives and to uncover new ideas. The success of our industry relies on one key component: diversity. The new ideas that emerge from our education does not come from putting thousands of similar people with similar opinions in the same room – it comes from inclusion.

Simply put, HB 1523 is not a bill that reflects the values of our industry. And if you and your fellow lawmakers continue to hold fast, here is where Mississippi and your citizens may feel the pain:

- **Our industry holds 1.83 million meetings annually in the United States**

- **Our meetings bring $28 billion in U.S. federal, state and local taxes annually**

- **More than $280 billion in annual U.S. direct spending is spurred by our industry**

HB 1523 ensures Mississippi's future percentage of these taxes and spending will exponentially be reduced. Potential losses include the multiple millions of dollars your convention and visitors bureaus and convention centers have spent to promote Mississippi as a welcoming destination. A reduction in visitors could also impact a spectrum of businesses across Mississippi, many of them with minimum wage workers employed in the hospitality industry. With fewer riders in your taxis, fewer guests in your hotels, fewer diners in your restaurants and fewer shoppers in your stores the end result will be lose, lose.

We strongly urge you and the leadership of Mississippi's legislature to repeal this unconscionable law.

Sincerely,

Deborah Sexton
President and CEO
Professional Convention Management Association