

To the Editor:

I am the general manager of (venue) in (city). I am proud of our facility, the XXXX events that we've hosted for the community, and our vital role in the local economy.

Like so many, we have been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our publicly owned arena was among the first to close, and we will be among the last to reopen. We face enormous challenges just to stay afloat, never mind the expensive physical changes we'll need to make so future patrons are and feel safe when we reopen. With no revenue coming in, I'm not sure how we do it.

Why is that? The city (or county) created us to serve as a hub of economic and social activity in our community, drawing patrons to nearby restaurants and hotels.

Our funding mainly comes from event revenue and ticket sales to fund our daily operations and staff so we're not a line item in the city budget. That was smart planning and it worked.

No one expected that a pandemic would throw a wrench into that financial structure. That's why we need Congress to expand financial assistance under the federal Main Street Program and Paycheck Protection Program to include eligibility for publicly owned venues like ours and to include us in any recovery fund that may be created in this next COVID-19 package. We are a vital part of getting our local economies humming again.

We can't rely on the governments that created us because we're not in their budgets and they – rightly - must use their scarce resources to cover the costs of public safety, health care and other immediate COVID-19 response services.

In the meantime, we need help to keep the lights on and to prepare for when we can reopen for good. Senators X and X, and Congressman X, play a key role, and I hope they will help us.