



International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association

July 7, 2020

To the Governors of the United States of America:

Health and wellness have never been more essential to our country as they are at this **very** moment.

We know each of you is under immense pressure to stop the spread of COVID-19 in your state. We are writing to ask that you consider scientific evidence, Americans' mental and physical health, and not shut down gyms and fitness centers that can operate safely.

As leaders in the fitness and wellness industry, we value above all else the health and wellbeing of the millions of members (and staff) who visit the tens of thousands of gyms, clubs and studios operating across the 50 states. We are equally committed to doing our part to help stop the spread of COVID-19 – and our members, who are health conscious, share this mindset.

Here is what we know: **There is clear evidence that the fitness industry is not the problem when it comes to the spread of the virus.**

**Evidence shows the fitness industry is not spreading COVID-19.** This past spring, we closed our facilities in good faith and based on your mandates to help flatten the COVID-19 curve. Given how little was known about the new virus, it was the right thing to do for the safety and well-being of our members and employees. We then worked within each of your states to develop [stringent safety and sanitation protocols](#) for reopening fitness locations – including limited capacities, distancing mandates, sanitation and cleaning standards, face mask requirements for staff members and more.

It was also important for us to share these rigorous reopening standards with our members, who are health conscious and understand that our facilities are reopening in a safe and responsible manner.

Today, we have evidence since reopening that gyms, clubs and studios are not causing the current virus spikes many states are seeing.



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In a survey of 135 clubs with 3,443,123 total check-ins, fitness industry consultant, Blair McHaney of MXM/Medallia reports that there were 0.004% of positive cases reported as of June 30.

Contact tracing in some states supports this finding. For example, while Arkansas is experiencing a spike in COVID-19 cases, [contact tracing from the state government](#) shows **0.3%** of newly infected individuals visited a gym. Additionally, [new research](#) from the University of Oslo **found no** COVID-19 transmissions associated with fitness centers in a randomized trial of reopened fitness facilities. (As a result, [Norway reopened its gyms](#) nationwide.)

### **Meanwhile... there's an absence of evidence.**

It's worth noting that our industry has seen **NO tracing data** provided by public health officials that indicates that gyms, clubs or studios in the U.S. are contributing to the spread of the virus.

### **And let's not forget: Exercise strengthens immune systems**

Moderate exercise has been shown time and again to help immune systems. Data shows that obesity increases the likelihood of hospitalization with a COVID-19 infection six-fold.

However, according to worldwide fitness tracker [data](#), **physical activity has decreased by 5%** since the pandemic began – no doubt, in part to the shutdown of gyms, clubs and studios. The millions of Americans who represent **our members make a conscious decision to take care of their individual physical health** by working out. They also know that exercise has emotional and mental benefits as well. These Americans are worthy of having access to the gyms, clubs and studios to take care of their health.

Combined, these data points offer clear indications that the safety and sanitation policies implemented at gyms, clubs and studios that have been allowed to reopen are effective – and that these businesses may pose little to no additional risk for COVID-19 transmission compared to other public places.

Plus, we provide an essential service to help Americans stay healthy and strong. The vast majority of clubs, gyms and studios across the U.S. are small, locally-owned businesses.



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They provide essential services to their members, are responsible members of their community and are safe to operate according to all available scientific evidence.

We call on you, governors, and your respective departments of health, to consider the evidence on where the virus is spreading when making decisions and allow gyms, clubs and studios to safely operate in your state. As an industry, we will in turn continue to operate in good faith to ensure the facilities that millions of Americans trust to help them stay healthy and strong are clean, safe and operating in a responsible manner.

To your health and wellness,

***Following is a list of fitness industry leaders representing thousands of health and fitness clubs from all 50 states:***

Chuck Runyon, co-founder and CEO, David Mortensen, co-founder and president, Self Esteem Brands

Stacy Anderson, President, Anytime Fitness

Angela Jaskolski, President, The Bar Method

Ben Camper, President, Basecamp Fitness

Amy Halford, Chief Marketing Officer, Self Esteem Brands

Bill McBride, Co-Founder, President & CEO, Active Wellness

Matthew Stevens, President & CEO, The Bay Club Company

Vicki Brick, CEO, Brick Bodies

Michele Melkerson-Granryd, General Manager, Castle Hill Fitness

Greta Wagner, Executive Director, EVP, Chelsea Piers Connecticut

Cory Brightwell, CEO, Chuze Fitness



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Bill Beck, President, Club Fit

Paula Neubert, President/General Manager, Club Greenwood

Shaun Grove, President, Club Pilates

Larry Welch, Owner, Cross Gates Family Fitness

Jim Rowley, CEO, Crunch

Brent Darden, Brent Darden Consulting

Luke Carlson, CEO, Discover Strength

Rich Drengberg, CEO, EoS Fitness

Josh Harwood, Chief Administrative Officer, Fitness Connection

Gale T. Landers, Founder and CEO, Fitness Formula Clubs

Anastasia Yusina, Founder, FITSPACE Boutiques

Jamie Hamler, COO, Franco's Athletic Club

Rodney Steven, President/Owner, Genesis Health Clubs

Adam Zeitsiff, President & CEO, Gold's Gym

Angel Banos, Jr, President & CEO, GOLD'S GYM SOCAL

Bryan O'Rourke, Gold's Gym Magnolia

Jason Reinhardt, Owner, Go M.A.D. Fitness

Josh York, Founder & CEO, GYMGUYZ

Cher Harris, General Manager, The Houstonian Club

Mark Harrington Jr., President, Healthworks Fitness and Republic Fitness

Caitlin Tvrdik, Global Vice President of Marketing, Lift Brands, Inc.

Frank Lawrence, CEO, Little Rock Athletic Club



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Karen M. Raisch-Siegel, Executive Director, LifeWorks of Southwest General

Steven Schwartz, CEO and Jon Brady, President, Midtown Athletic Clubs

Jim Worthington, Owner, Newtown Athletic Club (The NAC)

Val Paese, CEO, New York Health & Racquet Club

Bill Lia, Executive Director, New York State Fitness Association

Shannon Hudson, CEO & Co-Founder, Heather Hudson, COO & Co-Founder, 9Round

David Long, CEO and Co-Founder, Orangetheory Fitness

James W. Thompson, President, Oakland Hills Tennis Club, Inc.

Glenn Norris, CFO, Planet Fitness Growth Partners

Curt Larson, President, Plymouth Fitness

Michael Dabish, President, Powerhouse Gyms

Dick Knight, President, PRO Sports Club

Sarah Luna, President, Pure Barre Franchising, LLC

Matt Remick, President, Rochester Athletic Club

Ramon Castillon, President, Row House Franchise LLC

Ren Rice, President, Riviera Fitness, French Riviera Fitness, The Parks Health & Fitness

Ty Menzies, CEO, Alison McElroy, President, International & CLO, Snap Fitness

Anne Mahlum, CEO, Solidcore

Jim Zupancic, CEO, Evan Zupancic, COO/GM, Stafford Hills Club

Larry Conner, President/GM, Stone Creek Club & Spa

Jeff Stokes, President, STRIDE Franchise, LLC

Carrie Kepple, STYLES Studio Fitness



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Derek Gallup, Executive Vice President, UFC Gym

Rick Casselbury, Owner, Universal Athletic Club

John Galiani, Founder & Co-Executive Chairman, US Fitness Holdings, LLC

Aaron Moore, VIDA Fitness

JoAnna Masloski, COO, Wellbridge

Anthony Geisler, XPONENTIAL FITNESS, LLC

Shannon Hudson, CEO & Co-Founder, Heather Hudson, COO & Co-Founder, 9Round