Open letter to event and party planners holding events without mask requirements

Introduction

We are a group of sick and disabled queers in Chicago, writing this letter from a place of love for our communities, rage at the disregard for caution and care, and hope for change and accountability.

We are concerned for the safety of all of our community members. **We are disappointed to see that, in over 2+ years of living with Covid, event and party planners still plan and promote events that are unsafe and inaccessible. To us this means parties with no capacity limits and no mask requirements.**

We have already seen the repeated cycle of abandoning mask mandates and its correlation with the rise of cases. Furthermore, we know that vaccination status is not a guarantee of safety regarding spread.

Continued Covid safety is urgent at this moment because we refuse to spend another year recklessly endangering and isolating our most vulnerable community members. We refuse to ignore the fact we are still in the midst of this pandemic and that Covid is a dangerous virus, not just for disabled people.

As sick and disabled queers and our allies, it is infuriating to hear people in positions of social power using the excuse that they must gather in these ways for their own joy and for their mental health. This prolongs the isolation of our most isolated community members and does not address the joy and mental health of those of us who cannot afford the privilege of risk and recklessness. Our mental health has suffered, too, and it matters, too.

The insistence on holding unsafe parties and events disproportionately impacts already isolated Black and Brown disabled people. It is both ironic and painful to witness how organizers are coopting the language of accessibility and disability justice to talk about inclusivity and queer joy for “everyone,” while blatantly leaving so much of our community behind.

What you stand to lose if you actually pause events and take the time to address the access needs of all of your community members is minimal in comparison to losing the ability to connect with our most vulnerable community members and, in the worst but very realistic cases, we lose lives by continuing to not address safety and basic accessibility.

Whether you’re planning or attending community gatherings, change can only happen if we collectively hold each other to a higher standard of collective care in practice, not just in words or theory.

If you are willing to join us in the call for change and accountability please review our requests and the resources provided below.

Requests for Event Planners:

- Have mask requirements and capacity limits at your events.
- Include outdoor & virtual options for safety and access.
- Speak openly and publicly about what steps you're taking to make your events safer and more accessible.
- Use your social media platforms to share about this call in and your own action steps.
- Be critical and responsible when looking at the current data surrounding covid cases and safety recommendations. Make decisions based on what is actually true vs. what you wish to be true.
- Hire disabled people to help you do this access and safety planning work if you feel unequipped to do it!
- Please read through the provided resource links below.
- Discuss how you might implement changes, both with your collaborators and community members.

Resources!
Articles
Imani Barbarin: My Black Disabled Life Is Worthy - Cosmopolitan

You Are Not Entitled To Our Deaths: COVID, Abled Supremacy …

Disability Justice Resources
Sins Invalid: Access Suggestions for Public Events

Disability Justice: Audit Tool

Inclusive Arts Resources

Covid Safety Research Resources Transmission of Covid amongst Vaccinated Communities

Requests for Partygoers:

Solidarity and action from the wider community, regardless of your disability status, is required for change to happen.

We request that you:

- Sign this letter using the link provided at the end
- Call in and boycott events that aren't sharing access info or meeting basic safety and accessibility guidelines
- Participate in any community discussions that are held around these topics
- Use your social media platform to share why having covid safe and accessible parties is important to you

Dreams

We don't want to return to normal. We want to dream and imagine a less ableist future where we listen to each other and take care of each other. We want to build spaces that work for everyone, and we want this for ourselves and for our future generations of queers.

We want to move slower and with intention. More people are becoming disabled every day, and we need Disability Justice dreams to hold us and guide us.

Changing the way we gather and celebrate as a community will take patience, imagination, and time, but we know that it's possible, worth it, and that it only gets easier the more that we practice with each other. I'm

If we allow ourselves to pause, listen, plan and dream, we can find so many new ways of being together. We are artists and dreamers and our strength is creativity. We have the capacity for change. We have the imagination for creative solutions. We can demonstrate love for everyone in the community by committing to this.

Please use this as an opportunity to collaborate with sick and disabled queer folks to reimagine different and more accessible parties, events, and gatherings.

To sign this letter and show your support, please add your signature at this link, and please share widely among your communities.

If you live outside the Chicago community, please feel free to share this language and resources and set up your own google form for folks to sign! Click here to see who has already signed.