

**For Immediate Release**

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**A Coalition of Business Leaders, SXSW and Texas Tourism Officials Sound Alarm Bells on SB 6, Other Discriminatory Bills– Calling Passage an Unnecessary Multi-Billion Dollar Disaster for the Texas Economy**

Austin, Texas – March 6, 2017 – A coalition of large and small businesses join SXSW, C3 Presents and Texas tourism and convention leaders in speaking out against SB 6 and other anti-business, discriminatory bills. Representatives from SXSW, C3, Alamo Drafthouse, Silicon Labs, the Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau, and the Texas Welcomes All campaign will gather at the State Capitol today and to send a unified message: SB 6 will hurt Texas' economy and businesses.

**When:**

**News Conference Monday, March 6, 2017 – 1 p.m.**

**Where:**

Texas Capitol  
North Steps  
1100 Congress Ave  
Austin, TX 78701

**Who:**

Phillip Jones, President & CEO, Visit Dallas; Texas Welcomes All  
Hugh Forrest, SXSW  
Charlie Jones, C3 Presents  
Karrie League, Alamo Drafthouse  
Tom Noonan, Austin CVB  
Belinda Matingou, Keep Texas Open for Business

Deirdre Walsh, Director of Communications, Silicon Labs  
Diane Crawford, Global Operations Director, Celanese

SXSW, which starts in just a few days, brought nearly \$326 million and more than 59,000 hotel bookings to Austin in 2016. Austin City Limits Music Festival added more than \$277 million to the Austin economy in 2016 through festival operations and attendee expenditures. Tom Noonan, President and CEO of Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau, noted that visitors to Austin create an economic impact of \$7 billion per year and warned that “discriminatory laws will have a cooling effect on tourism across Texas.”

“We’ve called Austin home for more than 30 years, and we care deeply about our partners in the community here,” said Hugh Forrest, SXSW Chief Programming Officer. “We’re concerned that SB 6, and other anti-business, anti-LGBT bills, won’t just give Texas a bad name – they’ll fundamentally harm so many of the phenomenal small businesses and entrepreneurs we work with each and every year to make SXSW such a success.”

“SB 6 is out of line with our values and we believe discriminatory bills like this stand to hurt so many people – from the LGBTQ people who will face increased levels of discrimination and harassment, to the local business owners who will lose money and face hardship because of an expected downturn in foot traffic. This is entirely avoidable, and that’s why we’re calling on Texas lawmakers to reject these dangerous and discriminatory bills,” said Charlie Jones, Partner, C3 Presents.

“Our home and our heart has been here in Texas for 20 years now,” said Karrie League, who founded Alamo Drafthouse with her husband in 1997.

“Lawmakers should understand that if celebrities and musicians scale back their participation in festivals like SXSW and ACL Music Festival, it will send an immediate ripple effect through the small business community here. It will be harder for us to pay our employees and keep the lights on. There is a lot at stake, and I sincerely hope lawmakers support the business community, the LGBT community, and reject this unnecessary measure.”

Phillip Jones, President and CEO of VisitDallas and head of the Texas Welcomes

All campaign, said the economic harm would be felt statewide, well beyond Austin. According to Jones, a number of conventions are already threatening to cancel in Dallas, Houston and San Antonio.

“We stand united today in calling for Texas leaders to move away from divisive rhetoric and scare tactics that are not based in any factual need,” said Jones.

“We ask them to focus on the growth and future of this great state. And we want to send a message to people from all walks of life: as far as we’re concerned, Texas Welcomes All.”

“When we ask workers to come to Silicon Labs, we have to be able to make the case that Texas is a place where they want to put down roots,” said Deirdre Walsh, Director of Communications, Silicon Labs. “That means we support policies that are inclusive, welcoming and grounded in sound business sense. SB 6 meets none of these criteria. It’s incredibly difficult for us to attract and keep talented employees if we’re doing business in a state that many perceive as hostile. If Texas lawmakers move forward with passing SB 6, they’ll be sending a message to major corporations that they don’t take their investments in the state seriously.”

Texas lawmakers are slated to hear testimony on SB 6 in the Senate Committee on State Affairs at 8 a.m. tomorrow. For a list of tourism stakeholders opposed to this discriminatory bill, please visit the Texas Welcomes All campaign ([www.texaswelcomesall.com](http://www.texaswelcomesall.com)). For a running tally of threatened or confirmed boycotts of Texas, [click here](#). The [Keep Texas Open for Business](#) coalition, which represents businesses from across the state opposed to SB 6, last week released a letter from nearly 70 corporations urging top lawmakers to reject discriminatory bills.