



December 17, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20201

Re: Distribution of the COVID-19 Vaccine to Employees of Essential Businesses

Dear Secretary Azar,

We previously wrote to you regarding the importance of frontline workers who are part of the essential critical infrastructure workforce receiving appropriate priority status as part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) vaccination plan. We write now to emphasize the interdependence of frontline workers within these different fields and the need to cover them broadly in the next round of vaccination priorities.

As a reminder, our national associations¹ represent the convenience, fuel retailing and heating fuels industry. Our industry's workers interact with a broad array of other essential workers every day. The industry serves about 160 million customers per day – nearly half the United States' population. By necessity, workers in our industry directly interact with customers inside and outside their stores every day. Those customers include health care workers of all stripes, first responders such as police and firefighters, and truckers, without whom food and vaccines could not get to the people who need them. Just like our industry's workers depend upon all of these other essential workers to protect their well-being, every frontline worker needs our industry ensuring there is fuel and other goods to make sure they can get to and do their jobs.

¹ NACS is an international trade association representing the convenience store industry with more than 2,200 retail and 1,600 supplier companies as members, the majority of whom are based in the United States. NATSO currently represents more than 4,000 travel plazas and truck stops nationwide, comprised of both national chains and small, independent locations. EMA is a federation of 47 state and regional trade associations representing energy marketers throughout the United States. EMA members supply 80 percent of all finished motor and heating fuel products sold nationwide including renewable hydrocarbon biofuels, gasoline, diesel fuel, biofuels, heating fuel, jet fuel, kerosene, racing fuel and lubricating oils. SIGMA represents a diverse membership of approximately 260 independent chain retailers and marketers of motor fuel.

Many of our member businesses have struggled to keep enough employees working throughout the pandemic to ensure they can do their part to feed and fuel America. It has not been easy as health, fear, and family needs have created obstacles and pressures on the industry's workforce that we could not have envisioned just one year ago.

As you consider who to include in Phase 1-B of the vaccine distribution plan, then, we strongly urge you to keep in mind the interdependence of essential workers in our industry and others. We need a critical number of essential workers across many sectors to ensure that we can all get through this crisis together.

The Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency recognized early on the importance of our industry to ensure Americans had food in markets, fuel at gas stations, heating fuels for homes and businesses and safe places for truck drivers to stop and refuel as they haul essential items across the country. In the deployment of a vaccine to protect Americans from COVID-19, that recognition should be applied to these critical workers.

Our employees have put themselves at risk since the beginning of the pandemic, working despite health concerns, and we believe they should be prioritized in vaccine deployment. We appreciate your consideration of our comments and sincerely thank you for the hard work you have done to protect the health of our country.

Sincerely,

National Association of Convenience Stores
National Association of Truckstop Operators
Energy Marketers of America
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America

cc: Robert R. Redfield, MD, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices