

April 17, 2020

President Donald Trump  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you are well aware, the nation's food supply is critical to the security and welfare of America. And, as you have recognized, the food chain – from farm and ranch to table – has a special responsibility to maintain operations to the fullest extent possible during this national emergency. Key links in the livestock food chain are facing substantial challenges to their ability to protect their workers, while also maintaining operations.

More than a million cattle, hog, and poultry producers and growers rely on meat and poultry packers and processors to convert their livestock and birds into food. Those processors have taken – and are taking – actions to ensure the safety of their employees. Yet there have been circumstances where plants have been threatened with closures or forced to close for indefinite and varying periods of time, in part because of the inconsistency from state to state in governing health and safety actions when employees are not at work.

To ensure livestock producers, poultry growers, and all food processors and their workers can continue to feed the nation, we respectfully request you emphasize the importance of allowing critical infrastructure food companies to responsibly and safely continue their operations to the fullest extent possible without undue disruption. Doing so will ensure that these crucial businesses can continue to process, produce, and deliver food to our nation.

We continue to support the strongest, most effective methods to protect these critical workers. Their health and safety must remain a top priority. We urge government health experts to work with the processing industry to continue developing and refining guidance specific to these critical plants to ensure the safest procedures are followed. Their continued operation is critical to the nourishment of American consumers now and when America is reopened.

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Conveying a clear and strong message about the importance of consistently following federal health and safety guidelines will help ensure consistent, responsible decision-making at the state level that allows food production to safely continue. In addition, we ask that you continue to reinforce a message of calm among all Americans to help quell the fear-driven absenteeism that is also impacting the food industry's ability to operate. We are grateful to the workers ensuring America's families continue to be fed, from packing plant staff to grocery store clerks.

We appreciate your leadership and all the great support from you, from the Vice President, and from Secretary Perdue.

Respectfully submitted,

American Farm Bureau Federation

National Cattlemen's Beef Association

National Chicken Council

National Pork Producers Council

National Turkey Federation

North American Meat Institute