

December 21, 2020

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
Governor, State of \_\_\_\_\_  
Address

RE: COVID-19 Vaccine

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing on behalf of the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA), which serves to advance a sustainable U.S. pulp, paper, packaging, tissue and wood products manufacturing industry through fact-based public policy and marketplace advocacy.

The forest products industry plays an essential role in responding to COVID-19 challenges by making numerous products for every day healthy living, including tissue products, pulp used in diapers and other personal hygiene products, papers for communication and education, building/construction products, and packaging for food, beverages, foodservice, cleaning supplies, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and other consumer products, and shipping boxes that get those products to market. Forest products also are playing an important role in ongoing safety efforts and in supporting essential commerce, including the safe packaging and shipment of COVID-19 tests and vaccinations. We stand ready to assist you in your efforts to protect state residents.

As national leaders begin to develop distribution, logistical, and other plans to administer COVID-19 vaccines, AF&PA respectfully requests policymakers ensure that forest product industry workers continue to be deemed “critical infrastructure workers,” and therefore, prioritized in vaccination distribution<sup>1</sup>. Following the release of the first doses to health care workers, the elderly and other vulnerable Americans, critical infrastructure workers – like those in our industry – should be included in the early phases of vaccine distribution to safeguard our essential industry’s ability to continue seamless operations.

Throughout this national emergency, forest products industry workers have been classified by the Department of Homeland Security Cyber and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) as essential. In the most recent CISA guidance, the forest products industry was added under the “Critical Manufacturing” section of the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers heading, which helps ensure forest products industry manufacturing operations and production continues. Disruptions in the availability of forest products would cause significant hardships throughout our country and the world.

Safety is the number one priority of AF&PA's members. Manufacturing facilities, including mills and converting plants, cannot operate remotely and require day-to-day onsite presence of highly-trained employees. This also includes technical support necessary to ensure continued and safe operations of the facilities and distribution systems.

However, it is more than just onsite employees who are critical to the forest products industry. The chain of essential workers related to the industry flows outside of physical facilities. Our members rely on our essential suppliers and partners upstream and downstream, including, but not limited to: sawmills, land owners and those engaged in timber sale preparation and logging; converting facilities that turn paper and paperboard into finished products; businesses involved in the collection, sortation, processing and delivery of recovered fiber; suppliers of other essential ingredients to papermaking; businesses involved in providing supplies to support the ongoing operation and maintenance of paper machines and other manufacturing equipment and businesses that distribute our products to the marketplace. This recognition of our supply chain has given the forest products industry the assurances we need to continue our work.

The forest products industry supplies the country with critical and necessary goods during the pandemic. Accordingly, it is imperative that your state continues to deem the forest products industry as "essential infrastructure workers," eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination in the early phases of distribution. Please let us know how we can assist you in your distribution efforts or if you would like additional information regarding efforts to protect our employees and communities' health while continuing to produce essential products.

Sincerely,

Heidi Brock  
President & CEO

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<sup>i</sup> The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) recently published a Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine that proposes prioritizing essential critical infrastructure workers under Phase 2 of vaccine distribution. Citing this and other frameworks, as well as guidance from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended this approach to state, local, tribal, and territorial public health authorities.