

December 4, 2020

The Honorable Tony Evers
Governor, State of Wisconsin
P.O. Box 7863
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Evers,

On behalf of the tens of thousands of people who work in Wisconsin's food and beverage, production agriculture, agricultural supply chain, and retail supply chain, we write to urge you to preserve the "critical infrastructure" designation adopted by the Department of Homeland Security as you develop Wisconsin's microplan for vaccine distribution.

As you know, our frontline workers helped keep the skeletal economy afloat in the earliest days of the pandemic. Our farmers and agricultural workers, and food and beverage production employees ensured that Wisconsinites had access to motor vehicle fuel and plentiful supplies in grocery stores and other retail outlets. These brave men and women have continued to work throughout the duration of the pandemic.

Our industries have taken necessary steps to ensure our workers are safe, including use of PPE, temperature checks, hand washing and social distancing. We've also stepped up to help the vulnerable in our communities. Many of the organizations listed here have supported efforts to aid those most impacted by the virus, including donations to food banks and other charitable organizations. We have also established strong working relationships with governmental organizations that have coordinated the national, state and local response to the pandemic, and look forward to continuing that work in the months to come.

It is imperative that workers at the farm production level, in the food and beverage processing industries and grocery and retail level continue to operate as part of critical infrastructure to ensure a safe and readily available food and beverage supply. We cannot afford food or beverage shortages – or the perception of such – as we head into the winter months.

The National Academy of Sciences four-phase plan (*Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine*) recommends employees in these sectors be eligible to receive vaccines in Phase 2 behind medical workers, first responders and those populations most vulnerable to the disease. The details within the Academy report refer back to the Department of Homeland Security's categorization of "essential critical infrastructure workers" established in the first weeks of the pandemic, and describes food and beverage production, food store workers and truck drivers as among those so designated. Also, this week, the members of the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommended the first phase of vaccination begin with about 21 million health care workers and about 3 million adults who live in long-term care facilities, followed in their Phase 1b by "essential workers".

We must ensure that our food and beverage supply chain operates uninterrupted. You can achieve this by prioritizing these sectors' workers for vaccination. Thank you for all you and your Administration has done to assist the food and beverage industries, the agriculture industry, the food insecure, and our network of feeding programs. We look forward to working with you to assure that vaccines are distributed in a timely and coordinated way.

Sincerely,



AgCountry Farm Credit Services . Compeer Financial . Cooperative Network . Dairy Business Association . GreenStone Financial Services . Midwest Food Products Association . Syngenta Crop Protection LLC . Venture Dairy Cooperative . Wisconsin Beverage Association . Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association . Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association . Wisconsin Dairy Alliance . Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation . Wisconsin Grocers Association . WI Petroleum Marketers & Convenience Store Association . Wisconsin Pork Association . Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association . Wisconsin Restaurant Association . Wisconsin Soybean Association . Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association

cc: Andrea Palm, Secretary Designee, WI Dept. of Health Services (via Andrea.palm@dhs.wisconsin.gov)
State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee (via Kathleen.caron@dhs.wisconsin.gov)