



# Food & Beverage

## ISSUE ALLIANCE

December 17, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo  
Chair  
National Governors Association  
444 North Capitol St. NW, Suite 267  
Washington, DC 20001

The Honorable Asa Hutchinson  
Vice Chair  
National Governors Association  
444 North Capitol St. NW, Suite 267  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Governor Cuomo and Governor Hutchinson,

We are writing to reiterate our request for priority access to COVID-19 vaccines for frontline and other essential employees across the food, beverages, agriculture, consumer goods, retail, and foodservice sectors after the needs of our nation's healthcare workers and first responders are met. We also offer suggestions to assist, when necessary, in sub-prioritizing among these employees, in close coordination with employers, during the early phase of vaccine allocation when vaccines are limited.

The industry's workers have gone above and beyond to meet extraordinarily high demand for products indispensable to pandemic response, such as food, beverages, disinfectants, cleansers, hand sanitizer, toilet paper and personal hygiene products. In determining the allocation of COVID-19 vaccines within your state, the undersigned respectfully request that our workforces be prioritized for vaccines in Phase 1b, as outlined in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) [COVID-19 Vaccination Program Interim Playbook](#). Prioritization will ensure continued operations and supply of food, beverages, and other critical consumer packaged goods to people around the country.

Our sectors are integral parts of Americans' ability to stay home and stay safe throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, populating key segments in our nation's critical infrastructure, as recognized by the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (DHS-CISA) ["Guidance for Tier 1 Type of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers."](#)

Manufacturing facilities, farms, retail stores, warehouses, distribution centers and restaurants remain open, with employees working around-the-clock to ensure that stores remain stocked. The industry has been operating under emergency safety measures, based on federal and state guidance, with the understanding that essential critical infrastructure workers must conduct their work with great care. These measures follow tailored best practices to their facilities to prevent the exposure and transmission of COVID-19. The industry has carefully followed the evolving frontline worker guidelines published by the CDC, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Food and Drug Administration and other federal agencies.

There is tremendous support from the general public for the essential nature of the work performed by these employees. In a recent survey of 2,200 Americans, Morning Consult found that more than four in five adults believe grocery store workers (90%) and agriculture and food production workers (85%), among others, should be made a priority when it comes to being among the first to receive the coronavirus vaccine. Moreover, 71% of adults support companies and employers partnering with public health agencies at local and state levels to aid in distributing the coronavirus vaccine. The full survey data are [here](#).

From the beginning of this crisis, we have advocated for actions that protect workers including priority access to personal protective equipment, critical hygiene and cleaning supplies, testing and vaccines. Yet, community transmission of the virus remains one of the largest threats to the industry's workforce. An effective vaccination campaign may be the best defense against disruptions to the availability of the essential items that are critical to the well-being of the nation's first responders, health care personnel and professionals who will be administering vaccines.

### **Suggested Criteria for Sub-Prioritizing COVID-19 Vaccination Among Essential Workers**

Phase 1b prioritization for the workforce is a needed defense measure to ensure that all essential workers in each critical infrastructure sector are protected and remain healthy. The following are considerations for sub-prioritizing, when necessary, essential workers within the food, beverage, agriculture, consumer goods, retail, and foodservice sectors for vaccination during the early phase of vaccine production and distribution, when vaccine supplies are limited. As vaccine supplies and needs at the local levels will vary from locality to locality and state to state, these criteria will likely need to be tailored to local conditions in coordinating with companies/employers within these Phase 1b sectors.

#### High priority (Phase 1b)

- Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers within the food, beverage, agriculture and consumer goods sectors, including retail, foodservice, *etc.*, as defined by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency's *Advisory Memorandum on Identification of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers During COVID-19 Response*,<sup>1</sup> in roles that require on-site labor (*e.g.*, not able to telework and with a hands-on role in food production, development, storage and distribution) and other critical employees, such as:
  - Certain food and CPG processing/production, logistics, maintenance, security, sanitation, and other employees, working onsite or off-site, who are critical for operations to remain functional;
  - Employees with frequent, required engagement with the public or other workers where social distancing may not be possible at all times, masks and other protective measures may be in place, but prolonged interaction with others is required (*e.g.*, retail/grocery store clerks, vending operators, restaurant wait staff, cooks, delivery/order assembly personnel, food manufacturing/production employees working in close proximity, *etc.*); and
  - Employees who work in hot and humid conditions or other situations that make mask wearing for long periods of time more difficult or uncomfortable.
- Certain distribution and supply chain truck drivers (This workforce is facing significant shortages in certain areas and may need to be prioritized in such cases.)
- Employees over 60 (or another age).
- Employees with underlying health conditions, including heart disease, cardio-vascular disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes, pregnancy, *etc.*
- Employees living in congregate housing or using shared transportation to and from work.
- Employees living or working in jurisdictions with a high illness rate (>5% positivity and/or 10 cases/100K).

#### Lower Priority (Phases 2 and 3)

- Non-critical office and other employees (except those who meet criteria in 1b) who can easily maintain social distancing standards during their time at work (which could include certain truck drivers and delivery personnel where local labor shortages are not a concern).

As organizations representing the food, beverage, agriculture, retail, and consumer packaged goods supply chain, we look to partner with federal, state and local public health officials to help reinforce the

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<sup>1</sup> [U.S. Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, Advisory Memorandum on Identification of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers During COVID-19 Response – March 28, 2020.](#)

importance and safety of vaccinations and ensure our essential workers can access and receive vaccinations as they become available. As noted previously, there is strong support and an expectation from the public that we will work in partnership to make these life-saving medicines available to our workforce. We appreciate your service and consideration as you determine vaccine allocation for these populations.

Respectfully submitted,

American Bakers Association  
American Beverage Association  
American Cleaning Institute  
American Frozen Food Institute  
Beer Institute  
Corn Refiners Association  
Distilled Spirits Council of the United States  
FMI – The Food Industry Association  
Global Cold Chain Alliance  
Household & Commercial Products Association  
International Dairy Foods Association  
International Foodservice Distributors Association  
National Automatic Merchandising Association  
National Beer Wholesalers Association  
National Confectioners Association  
National Fisheries Institute  
National Grocers Association  
National Oilseed Processors Association  
National Restaurant Association  
National Turkey Federation  
North American Meat Institute  
North American Millers' Association  
Peanut and Tree Nut Processors Association  
SNAC International  
United Fresh Produce Association