

December 9, 2020

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science
& Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science &
Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Deb Fischer
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation & Safety
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation & Safety
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Wicker, Cantwell, Fischer, and Duckworth:

Our organizations represent the women and men who have worked throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that our nation's freight, rail, port and waterway, and energy infrastructure continue to safely and reliably transport the products that Americans need every day. We write to ask for your assistance to ensure that our workforces, which support the continued viability of our domestic supply chain, have timely access to the COVID-19 vaccine to minimize the potential for supply chain disruptions, delays in vaccine distribution, and further adverse economic impacts, locally, regionally, and nationally.

This Committee demonstrated significant leadership at the onset of the pandemic by convening a hearing to examine the impact of COVID-19 on surface transportation and the supply chain. Proactive steps taken by the Committee have addressed the needs of workers supporting our nation's freight transportation network. Just as these focused efforts were necessary to support distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) to the dedicated professionals who ensure the continuity of our domestic supply chain, it is imperative that this Committee now focus its efforts to ensure that these same critical infrastructure workers have access to the COVID-19 vaccine as it becomes available.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has advised that COVID-19 will remain an unrelenting public health concern for months to come. As a result, the importance of a risk-based vaccine distribution plan cannot be overstated. Ensuring vaccine availability for freight, rail, port and waterway, and energy workers is a key protective intervention to help keep our critical supply chains operating, reinforce the resilience of our transportation networks, and mitigate the risk of economic downturns and their effects at the local, regional, and national levels. As we saw at the outset of the pandemic, when supply lines are disrupted, consequences are fast to follow.

Earlier this month, the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices met concerning the phased allocation of COVID-19 vaccines. The Advisory Committee recognized the importance of essential critical infrastructure workers, such as employees, contractors, and suppliers in our industries, and proposed that they be included in a "Phase 1b" vaccine sequence—after medical and healthcare

personnel and workers and residents in long-term care facilities identified for “Phase 1a.” We respectfully ask the Committee to support this projected allocation of COVID-19 vaccines.

Our industries are proud to continue to support America’s response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate the steps this Committee has taken to protect workers and keep the supply chain moving forward, and we ask that you consider the essential nature of our workforces as broader plans for vaccine distribution are solidified. We thank you again for your continued support during these challenging times.

Respectfully,

American Association of Port Authorities
American Short Line & Regional Railroad Association
Association of American Railroads
American Trucking Associations
American Waterways Operators
Inland Rivers, Ports & Terminals
Interstate Natural Gas Association of America
National Association of Waterfront Employers
National Maritime Safety Association
National Tank Truck Carriers
Truckload Carriers Association