



Eric Hoplin
President & CEO

February 23, 2021

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor, State of New York
Chair, National Governors Association
444 North Capitol Street NW #267
Washington, DC 20001

The Honorable Asa Hutchinson
Governor, State of Arkansas
Vice Chair, National Governors Association
444 North Capitol Street NW #267
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Governors Cuomo and Hutchinson:

As America continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, wholesaler-distributors are keeping the supply chain moving, meeting unprecedented challenges to protect the nation and keep the economy running. Today, I write on behalf of the wholesale distribution industry to encourage governors and localities within their states to classify wholesaler-distributors as critical and essential workers for vaccine administration just as federal guidance has categorized these men and women throughout the pandemic. We fully support the guidance to first vaccinate the frontline health care workers and our most vulnerable populations. Once they are protected, we are asking for you to help protect these essential workers, who—from the first days of the pandemic—have stayed at their posts, going into work every day to fulfill their vital role at the center of the economy.

The National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors (NAW) and our affiliated trade associations represent nearly 30,000 companies across the country that are integral parts of the supply chain that keeps goods and services moving across America. When the pandemic struck, we immediately mobilized to provide PPE, lifesaving medical equipment, medicine, and supplies to nearly every county in America. When hospitals reached capacity, we supplied the tents, plastic shields, furniture, and equipment to set up temporary facilities. When businesses and schools sought to reopen, we provided the cleaning products, state of the art HVAC and plumbing needed for cleaner air and water, barriers, furniture, and supplies of all kinds to keep the employees, customers, students, teachers, and staff safe. And now, we are a growing and essential part of the supply chain that is helping to manufacture and distribute the COVID-19 vaccines.

We appreciate the work state and local governments across the country have done to help combat the pandemic. As the country moves through phases of COVID-19 vaccine administration, NAW recognizes that state, local, tribal, and territorial governments are ultimately in charge of implementing and executing activities in communities under their jurisdiction while the federal government directs vaccine allocation.

As state and local governments determine vaccine eligibility for essential workers, we encourage them to incorporate the classification of essential workers as found in the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA) Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce: Ensuring Community and National

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WHOLESALER-DISTRIBUTORS

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Resilience in COVID-19 Response. This guidance was released in March 2020, updated periodically, and restated in December 2020. In a December 16th memo, CISA reiterated the importance of this guidance, specifically in context of vaccine distribution:

“We are now entering a new phase of our pandemic response when vaccines are available but in short supply and when infection rates are driving the continued application of public health measures in communities. For this reason, we want to re-promote the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce Guidance Version 4.0. Although this version of the guidance is unchanged from the August 2020 release, we want to reiterate our belief that it remains an important tool for COVID-19 planning, even in this new environment.”

Throughout the pandemic, many states followed the CISA guidance in their respective actions to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Adoption of CISA guidelines provided clear, consistent, and more uniformly aligned guidance to businesses as our nation responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. To continue this uniformity and consistency, we request that as states and localities choose to vaccinate essential workers, the same workers deemed essential under the CISA guidelines are deemed essential workers for the purposes of vaccine distribution.

As always, we stand ready to assist in any way in the effort to combat COVID-19, save lives and get our country back to work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Hoplin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "H".

Eric Hoplin
President & CEO

cc: State Governors