



ISRI is the voice of the recycling industry, promoting safe, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible recycling through networking, advocacy and education.

March 18, 2020

The Vice President
Old Executive Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President:

On behalf of the nearly 165,000 workers in the U.S. Scrap Recycling Industry¹, we sincerely appreciate all your efforts and the efforts of the President's Coronavirus Task Force in combatting one of the worst pandemics in our nation's history.

Over the past several days, many state and local governments have been ordering the shutdown of "non-essential" businesses. We recognize and fully support the need to take these drastic actions in order to stop the spread of COVID-19. However, we urge you to help provide consistency in the determination of what is considered essential by formally recognizing that recycling operations are essential businesses, necessary for the continued supply of raw materials for U.S. manufacturing, including the steel and papermaking industries that are part of the foundation of our country's manufacturing economy and that are relied upon by Americans every day for producing everything from automobiles, appliances and construction equipment to food packaging, writing papers and toilet paper. The recycling industry is essential to supplying U.S. manufacturing with the materials necessary to produce steel, aluminum, paper, plastics, rubber and many other materials.

Recycling is the first link in the U.S. manufacturing supply chain, supplying 40%, on average across all commodities, of this country's raw material needs. The U.S. steel industry, for example, relies on a steady supply of ferrous scrap from recyclers to supply its mills, without which they could not operate as 70% of all U.S. produced steel is made from ferrous scrap supplied by recyclers from across the country. Over three-quarters of U.S. paper mills utilize recovered paper from recycling operations for their daily production needs. This supply chain cannot be halted and restarted without significant supply disruptions that would ripple throughout the entire U.S. manufacturing chain.

Several of the manufacturing industries that recyclers regularly supply have been officially designated as part of the U.S. "Critical Manufacturing Sector" by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), including: iron and steel mills and ferro alloy manufacturing, alumina and aluminum production and processing, and nonferrous metal production and processing. According to DHS, "The Critical Manufacturing Sector is crucial to the economic prosperity and continuity of the United States. A direct attack on or disruption of certain elements of the manufacturing industry could disrupt essential functions at the national level and across multiple critical infrastructure sectors."

Recyclers also play an essential role in helping state and local governments manage their needs and responsibilities by providing a critical outlet for the recyclable materials generated within their communities, without which these valuable commodities would build up and be lost for supply to manufacturers, ending up





ISRI is the voice of the recycling industry, promoting safe, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible recycling through networking, advocacy and education.

wrongfully in the waste stream. Recyclers across the country work daily with local municipalities to ensure these recyclables are collected, processed and successfully enter the manufacturing supply chain. The vast majority of these recycling operations (often called Material Recovery Facilities, or MRFs) are for-profit operations and not government-owned, and are therefore at risk of being shut down by well-intended emergency measures. The ramifications would not only hurt manufacturing, but also prove contrary to the public health goals by complicating the entire residential curbside recycling system.

As the Administration takes steps to limit the spread of Coronavirus and limit commercial activity, we ask that all recycling operations across the U.S. be designated “essential” to public health and welfare, as well as to our nation’s economic infrastructure. We also ask that you ask state and local governments to make the same designation.

Sincerely,

Robin K. Wiener
President

¹ The Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc. (ISRI) is the Voice of the Recycling Industry with approximately 1300-member companies operating in thousands of locations in the United States. Our members are present throughout the entire recycling supply chain including companies that process, broker and consume recyclable materials, including scrap metal, paper, plastics, electronics and rubber.