



RETAIL INDUSTRY LEADERS ASSOCIATION

99 M Street, SE
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www.rila.org

November 10, 2020

Dear President-Elect Biden,

Congratulations on a hard-fought victory. America's leading retailers appreciate your immediate focus on a strategy to contain the spread of coronavirus, and we stand ready to support your task force in its efforts to provide "clear, consistent, evidence-based guidance for how communities should navigate the pandemic."

Since the outset of the pandemic, retailers have been relentlessly focused on shopping safe to ensure families have the goods and services they need. In April retailers created and shared with our nation's governors "A Blueprint for Shopping Safe," which put in place uniform standard rules of operations that will accomplish three key objectives: (1) Protect our communities (2) Allow for the safe reopening of retail and (3) Establish clear expectations for employees and customers.

In response retailers revamped store operations, invested billions in additional training, enhanced cleaning procedures, added personal protective equipment, adopted safety protocols, and transformed their operating models to accommodate curbside pick-up and enhanced online ordering. And while we all have high hopes for therapeutics to aid those infected with the virus, and ultimately a vaccine to prevent infection; America's retailers know that continuing to operate with rigorous safety protocols is the best way to stop the spread of the coronavirus and protect the communities in which we operate.

Over the past seven months, America's retailers have demonstrated their commitment to the health and safety of their communities and have proven that they can remain open and safely serve the public. Regardless of what they sell, retailers have earned the confidence of customers and regulators alike by putting safety first. While no business can completely eliminate risk, we are confident the measures retailers continue to implement greatly minimize the possibility of COVID-19 spread and are the right approach for the country until there is widespread immunity from the virus.

And now with the upcoming holiday shopping season, retailers are providing more ways to shop, and creating a longer, socially distant sales period which is already underway. You will not see doorbusters or special deals that encourage crowds. Instead, retailers are:

- Spreading out promotions and discounts and making them available in-store and online;
- Expanding e-commerce and delivery options;
- Standing up curbside pick-up and other contactless shopping options; and
- Installing physical barriers at points of sale and sanitation stations.

As we continue to work together to protect communities from the spread of COVID-19, we urge government actions to focus on safe retailing protocols, rather than outdated designations based upon what a retailer sells. Ensuring that all retailers are operating safely allows more options for customers, minimizes crowding, and puts the emphasis squarely on protecting employees and customers.

We also support your call for mask mandates. In fact, leading retailers voluntarily implemented mask requirements in their stores and have called on governors to implement [statewide](#) mandates. There must be a clear expectation that everyone wears a mask in public spaces. The science is abundantly clear and has proven the public and personal benefit of wearing a mask. Treating each other with respect and looking out for each other's health and safety is an American value, one that we should celebrate. We only ask that local authorities enforce any mask mandate and the burden not be placed on our store employees.

As the task force plans for the "effective, equitable distribution of treatments and vaccines" many retailers have stepped up during this global health crisis to assist with drive-through COVID-19 testing sites on their store properties, utilizing parking lots and partnering with state and local governments to expedite testing. Retailers are also at the forefront of helping the government distribute a coronavirus vaccine to long-term care facilities like nursing homes, so that our most vulnerable populations remain safe and healthy.

As an industry, retailers stand ready to assist with the important task of keeping all our Main Streets and storefronts open. We strongly believe the extraordinary steps local businesses have taken will help keep their communities safe. We invite you and the members of the task force to reach out to retail leaders to review proposed policies that would impact retailers and consumers. We want to be part of the solution.

The retail industry is committed to working with you to help all communities and to put this difficult year behind us by focusing on our shared values and an optimism that brighter days are ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Dodge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "D".

Brian Dodge
President, RILA

