



RETAIL INDUSTRY LEADERS ASSOCIATION

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December 22, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor, State of New York
Chairman
National Governors Association
444 North Capitol St. NW #267
Washington, DC 20001

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

Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, retail employees have helped families work, cook, educate, exercise, and entertain from home. By investing billions to procure and install safety equipment, train employees, and implement protocols to keep stores safe, retailers have been able to keep millions of employees in distribution centers and storefronts on the payroll, ensuring every American family had the food, medicine, clothing, and supplies they needed throughout the year.

As we approach the end of this long and difficult year, FDA approval of at least two vaccines with the potential to eradicate COVID-19 has given all Americans hope that life may return to normal in 2021. But while there is light at the end of the tunnel, retailers know many months remain before enough Americans will be vaccinated to ensure an umbrella of herd immunity and allow Americans to resume life as they knew it prior to the pandemic. Just as retailers led by adopting safe shopping protocols and requiring employees to wear masks in stores to protect one another, retailers will encourage all Americans to be vaccinated. The extraordinary speed with which the world's best researchers and scientists developed a COVID-19 vaccine is an amazing medical achievement, but it will be for naught if not enough Americans take the vaccine. Retailers are already participating in education and awareness campaigns to encourage Americans to get vaccinated.

In preparation for the deployment of approved vaccines, retail pharmacies are assisting governments and healthcare systems to quickly vaccinate front line medical personnel, first responders, and residents in nursing homes and long-term care facilities. All Americans will be relieved when the men and women dedicated to protecting all of us, and our most vulnerable citizens, are no longer at risk of contracting COVID-19.

While the first phase of this vaccination campaign is still in its infancy, public health officials are currently planning for the next phases. After prioritizing seniors and Americans with pre-existing medical conditions, policymakers will concentrate on teachers, mass transit workers and other employees who cannot telecommute. Retailers urge the nation's governors to include retail storefront and distribution center employees in this next category of vaccination recipients. For the millions of Americans who were

able to ride out this pandemic working from home, we relied on millions of others to stock shelves, deliver goods, clean stores, and provide American families with everything they have needed. These front line workers who kept our supply chain functioning and our storefronts open should be prioritized ahead of the general population.

Until we reach herd immunity, retailers will continue to promote the common-sense tactics that have kept stores, employees, and customers safe--wearing masks, sanitizing stores, practicing responsible distancing, and promoting good hygiene. And we will continue to urge employees to take the safety habits they have developed in stores home with them to stay Safe at Work, Safe at Home. With infections continuing to rise across the country, retailers will not let the extraordinary promise of vaccinations short-circuit the safety protocols developed throughout the pandemic to keep our employees and customers safe.

The retail industry greatly appreciates your continued partnership as we work together to distribute and administer the vaccine to eradicate coronavirus. Please let us know how we may be of assistance to your administration in the weeks and months 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

