



July 15, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the National Grocers Association (NGA), we applaud Congress for its quick and decisive action at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic to address the public health and economic crisis facing our country. The independent supermarket industry continues to experience ongoing and unexpected challenges as it works tirelessly to feed the American public. We are writing to request your consideration of including policies in the upcoming economic relief legislation to reward essential frontline workers, limit liability exposure of essential businesses, and expand nutritional access for hungry Americans.

NGA represents independently-owned grocery retailers and their wholesalers across the nation and in every community. Together, our members employ nearly a million Americans on a full-time or part-time basis and provide grocery and pharmacy services to millions of Americans every day. Our members are serving on the front lines of responding to the coronavirus public health crisis by providing food and medicine to Americans in this time of need.

Since early March, NGA members have experienced sustained and unprecedented levels of demand for grocery and household products. The industry's ability to meet our customers' needs would not be possible without the dedicated and talented frontline workers who show up to work every day to move product and keep store shelves stocked. These workers are serving even as they face serious challenges, including childcare, transportation interruptions and health concerns. While most grocers have increased pay and provided bonuses to their employees, the federal government should also recognize these individuals' sacrifices by including legislation in the final relief package that rewards frontline workers for serving the public. NGA supports the bipartisan AG CHAIN Act (H.R. 6841), introduced by Reps. Thompson (R-PA) and Evans (D-PA), a bill that provides an exclusion from gross income taxes and temporary payroll tax relief to essential food and agriculture workers.

Throughout the pandemic, grocers have faced workforce challenges in keeping up with the operational demands of running a food retail business during a pandemic. Historic consumer demand - in addition to enhanced sanitization practices and enforcement of social distancing guidelines - has required grocers to scale up their workforce significantly. However, NGA members are facing challenges retaining and recruiting employees to work. The additional \$600 per week in unemployment benefits included in the CARES Act has created a disincentive for employees to either continue working or return to work. While federal frontline worker benefits will boost the income of workers who remain on the job, Congress should

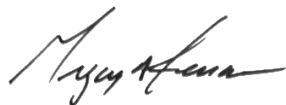
also consider modifying the unemployment insurance (UI) program if the additional benefits are extended beyond its July 31st expiration. A cap on total unemployment benefits at a certain percentage of the applicant's previous compensation level should be considered as an alternative to the current policy.

Independent grocers were proud to be designated as critical infrastructure by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at the beginning of the crisis. NGA members take their responsibility seriously to feed the American public. Unfortunately, grocers are under threat of frivolous litigation simply for remaining open during the pandemic. NGA is requesting that Congress protect essential infrastructure business from unnecessary liability exposure provided these businesses took reasonable steps to comply with the guidance from the CDC or other health authorities. The Get America Back to Work Act (H.R. 7528), a bipartisan bill introduced by Reps. Cuellar (D-TX) and Graves (R-LA), would help ensure grocers are protected if they made their best efforts to comply with federal, state, and local guidance.

Finally, the limits of federal nutrition programs, such as SNAP, WIC and Pandemic-EBT, are being tested as large numbers of Americans enroll in nutritional assistance during this difficult economic time. USDA recently launched the Online SNAP pilot to allow beneficiaries to redeem their SNAP benefits through grocery e-commerce websites. The pandemic has accelerated consumer demand for online grocery orders, especially amongst vulnerable populations who fear exposure to the coronavirus during a grocery store visit. NGA members are working tirelessly to provide their customers online options, but only a limited number of grocery retailers are capable of accommodating SNAP customers, a population generally at higher risk of worse outcomes from COVID-19. NGA requests that Congress include the Expanding SNAP Option Acts (H.R. 7535 /S. 4202) in the relief package. This legislation would expand access to online SNAP by providing grocers with technical assistance help in implementing an online program and deferring expensive startup costs for retailers that lack capacity and resources necessary to get online. Additionally, NGA also requests that Congress consider emergency funding to help shore up the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, a popular program that increases the purchasing power of SNAP customers when they buy healthy fruits and vegetables.

Independent grocers appreciate your continued leadership through this public health and economic crisis. NGA stands ready to work with Congress to ensure Americans' most basic needs are being met during this unprecedented time. We appreciate your attention to our priorities in the next coronavirus relief package. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need anything from me or NGA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Ferrara". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Greg Ferrara
President and CEO
National Grocers Association

cc: All Members of Congress