



December 2, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo, Chair
The Honorable Asa Hutchinson, Vice Chair
National Governors Association
444 North Capitol Street, Suite 267
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Governors Cuomo and Hutchinson,

The Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO), like the rest of the nation, is eagerly awaiting the first wave of COVID-19 vaccine approvals from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Both the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) recommended specific groups of essential workers for early vaccination against COVID-19. Within the phased framework set forth by the ACIP, states will have the authority to determine which individuals will receive the first available doses of an approved vaccine. Without question, the first priority (Phase 1a) should be our front-line health care workers. We also support ACIP's Phase 1 prioritization of emergency first responders, food and agriculture industry workers, and individuals at high risk of serious illness and morbidity.

Critical industry workers, such as those in the biopharmaceutical and agricultural biotechnology sectors, must also be considered part of that early wave of vaccinations. As such, we urge you and your fellow governors to use the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers definition for the "essential workers" category in ACIP's Phase 1b. Specifically, this guidance cited "workers, including laboratory personnel, that perform critical clinical, biomedical and other research, development, and testing needed for COVID-19 or other diseases" as well as biotechnology company manufacturing workers as critical healthcare infrastructure workers. Accordingly, we believe that certain biotechnology employees, including those in research and manufacturing, as well as workers contributing to the manufacturing of personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitizers to enable safe



healthcare and vaccination during the pandemic should be recognized as part of critical risk workers included in ACIP's Phase 1b.

The biotechnology industry is innovating within the human health, food and agriculture, and industrial and environmental sectors. Inclusion of such workers – who cannot work from home - will ensure that our industry can continue to research, develop, and manufacture vaccines and treatments for this novel coronavirus, as well as many other life threatening diseases and conditions. It will also help ensure our food supply can continue uninterrupted as the nation continues to cope with the pandemic. The biotechnology industry is critical to saving lives and getting America back to work and back to school.

Thank you for considering this request. BIO and the entire biotechnology industry will continue to work with our nation's Governors to protect our citizens by continuing to provide vaccines and therapies, as well as safe and healthy food supplies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. McMurry-Heath".

Michelle McMurry-Heath, M.D., Ph.D.
President & CEO

CC: Bill McBride, Timothy Blute, Kate Johnson, Maribel Ramos, Kate Bukowski