



March 20, 2020

The Honorable Steve Bullock  
Governor of the State of Montana  
Capitol Building  
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Governor Bullock,

The mill manufacturing members of the Montana Wood Products Association (MWPA) would like to take this opportunity to thank-you for your support of Montana's timber industry. Your support is vitally important to sustaining Montana's timber infrastructure.

The MWPA directly represents Montana's industrial timberland owners and our primary and secondary wood manufacturers. Montana's wood manufacturing industry continues to be Montana's largest manufacturing sector, employing over 7500 people and providing approximately one billion in primary and secondary sales annually.

As you continue to grapple with the unprecedented impacts from the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the MWPA would like to draw your attention to an issue recently surfaced at the federal level regarding national shelter-in-place guidance and the essential critical worker tier one list.

The National Risk Management Center recently published draft guidance for state and local governments and the private sector to consider when implementing social-distancing measures or shelter-in-place orders. The guidance includes a proposed Tier 1 Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers list of workers that should be exempt from such orders due to the role they play in providing critical goods and services important to the national supply chain. We recognize that this guidance reflects the tremendous challenges and tradeoffs that we face in making decisions that best serve and protect our communities in such uncertain times.

To this end, the MWPA strongly urges you to grant a clear and broad-based exclusion to any potential state-directed shelter-in-place or quarantine order for timber operations and forest product manufacturers. Our timber industry is a primary source supplier and manufacturer of products essential to maintaining the operation of the national supply chain. Disruptions in raw material may lead to temporary layoffs and closures. Montana's timber industry must be poised to provide products important to the recovery of our nation when we emerge from the crisis at hand.

We believe the benefit gained by allowing these businesses to continue operations outweighs suspending operations. Currently, we are adhering to spring break-up protocols, but as we move

into summer, harvest operations will continue to be implemented by small crews with limited individual interactions. In the meantime, the mills have taken extreme precautions to limit employee exposure within the mill environment, including visitor contact and log delivery.

We implore you not to hamper the operations of critical supply chain industries like the forest products sector, and to do all within your power to ensure that these businesses are excluded from the restrictions of a shelter-in-place order.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this important matter. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns.

Best regards,

*Julia Altemus*

Julia Altemus  
Executive Director