



March 17, 2020

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Secretary of Homeland Security (Acting)
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Wolf:

In response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak and its effect on people across the country, our national associations¹, representing the convenience and fuel retailing industry, request recognition that gas stations and convenience stores are essential businesses during this national crisis.

On March 13, 2020, President Donald J. Trump declared a national emergency in response to the impact of COVID-19 on public health and safety in all fifty States and the District of Columbia. In conjunction with this national emergency, our organizations seek recognition that the services and goods we provide including fuel, food, medical and cleaning supplies among other items make our businesses critical to the ongoing functioning of communities around the nation. Convenience stores and fuel retailers are close to consumers; 93 percent of Americans live within 10 minutes of our members, including 86 percent of rural Americans. This proximity allows people to quickly acquire critical items in their neighborhood.

Fuel marketers and convenience stores provide essential services and products in communities including critical fuel availability for healthcare and medical professionals, first responders, delivery workers and everyone else who needs to travel the roads. Without fuel marketers selling fuel, for example, supply chains and deliveries will be disrupted. When disasters or emergencies occur, fuel marketers, most of which offer 24-hour operations, remain in operation as long as they can without putting their own employees' safety and wellbeing in harm's way. This means making sure fuel, food and other necessities are available for emergency workers and customers seeking what they need.

Our members provide essential items and services to consumers including ATMs, over the counter medicine, milk and bottled water, and redeeming SNAP benefits. In countless rural and urban communities designated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as "food deserts," our members are the community grocery store and drug store; serving those who would otherwise be

¹ NACS is an international trade association representing the convenience store industry with more than 2,200 retail and 1,600 supplier companies as members, the majority of whom are based in the United States. SIGMA represents a diverse membership of approximately 260 independent chain retailers and marketers of motor fuel.

left behind. This function is especially important during this crisis due to the limitations of public transportation being implemented in cities all across the nation.

Of significant concern during this pandemic is groups of people lingering near one another. The average time spent in a store in our industry is under four minutes and our members often have little to no direct physical contact with consumers filling up their tanks. Our members provide a quick transaction—with the public being encouraged to isolate during this crisis, this will mitigate concerns regarding the transfer of the coronavirus when consumers enter or pump gas at our member's locations.

In some states, our members have already started to see consumers rush to the pumps, which shows that Americans rely on our members in a time of crisis. Our members can provide essential food, medicine, and other goods to emergency workers and all other consumers as convenient alternatives to other store formats.

We appreciate your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to address this ongoing health crisis.

Sincerely,

National Association of Convenience Stores
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America