



December 18, 2020

Governor Andrew Cuomo, Chair
Governor Asa Hutchinson, Vice Chair
National Governors Association
444 North Capitol Street NW #267
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Prioritizing hotel employees for inclusion in phase 1b distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine

Dear Chair Cuomo and Vice Chair Hutchinson,

We greatly appreciate your ongoing leadership and efforts to protect the public as we continue to face this unprecedented public health crisis.

As the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine begins across the nation, we are now one step closer to ending the pandemic. And as you are likely aware, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) shared recommendations for allocation of the vaccine. Phase 1 of the CDC's proposed rollout, split into three stages, prioritizes health care providers and long-term care residents (phase 1a), essential workers (phase 1b) and adults with high-risk medical conditions and adults 65 and older (phase 1c). Now, as governors and state public health agencies begin to finalize COVID-19 vaccine distribution plans, we urge states to consider hotel employees for inclusion in phase "1b" of the vaccination rollout.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), a division of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), classifies essential workers as "workers who conduct a range of operations and services that are typically essential to continued infrastructure viability." CISA identifies "management and staff at hotels and other temporary lodging facilities that provide for COVID-19 mitigation, containment, and treatment measures or provide accommodations for essential workers" as essential workers. **Hotels have been utilized as places to quarantine for many during the pandemic and helped support all levels of government by opening our doors to first responders and medical professionals for a place to stay closer to their hospital or place work as they provide around-the-clock care to patients.** Hotel employees also remain on the frontlines, and each day that they come to work, they welcome both global and domestic travelers increasing their likelihood of contracting the virus. While hotels have protocols in place to ensure limited contact between employees and guests, prioritizing employees with access to the vaccine would provide another layer of protection.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the hotel industry has worked diligently to support frontline healthcare workers and first responders through AHLA's "[Hospitality for Hope Initiative](#)." The initiative was launched in March and designed to match emergency and healthcare workers who require temporary housing with hotels during this unprecedented health crisis.

Established in partnership with AHLA's partner state associations, Hospitality for Hope identified more than 17,000 properties nationwide located in close proximity to healthcare facilities at the ready to assist government efforts. Hospitality for Hope partnered the hotel industry with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in coordination with the US Army Corps of Engineers and local emergency management and public health agencies to provide access to hotel properties and room to support frontline workers in need of temporary housing while working on the front lines of the pandemic. And as the nation continues to battle the pandemic, the hotel industry remains committed to serving and housing the frontline medical staff and vulnerable populations across the nation.

The hotel industry has a longstanding commitment to cleanliness and safety for our employees and guests and rolled out our [Safe Stay Guidelines](#) to elevate our cleaning and disinfection efforts even further . However, our employees continue to be on the front lines for interstate travelers which increases exposure risk – another important reason why hotel workers should be included in the Phase 1b vaccine distribution. Additionally, given their often close proximity to hospitals and critical infrastructure such as airports and interstates, hotels could potentially be utilized during vaccine distribution, therefore increasing the need for vaccine distribution among hotel employees.

During the pandemic, we have continued and built upon this commitment to ensure hotels are cleaner and safer than ever before. In accordance with guidance issued by public health authorities, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), AHLA launched "Safe Stay" – an industry-wide commitment to enhanced cleaning protocols and safety guidelines to meet and exceed the concerns created during the COVID-19 pandemic. Safe Stay has been endorsed by leading scientists, physicians and public health experts in epidemiology and infectious diseases.

Travel and tourism are critical drivers of the American economy, and while travel demand has hit record lows, ensuring hotel employees are prioritized during the vaccine rollout will help keep both employees and guests safe when it becomes safe to travel and resume meetings and events once again.

As an industry of people taking care of people, the hotel industry has taken steps to support and strengthen the community during this public health crisis. We ask that the employees who power our industry are prioritized during phase 1b of the vaccine roll out.

Once again, we thank you for your support, and we ask that you prioritize hotel employees as states finalize recommendations for COVID-19 vaccine distribution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chip Rogers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chip Rogers

President and CEO of the American Hotel and Lodging Association

CC: Governors of the United States