



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30329-4027

May 7, 2020

The Honorable Abby Finkenauer
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Finkenauer:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the impact of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on the meatpacking workforce in Iowa. We understand that you have ongoing concerns about this rapidly evolving situation.

The meat packing industry is a vital component of the American economy and the domestic and global food supply chain. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration recently released guidance specifically developed for the industry, *Meat and Poultry Processing Workers and Employers: Interim Guidance from CDC and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration*, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/meat-poultry-processing-workers-employers.html.

As of May 2, 2020, at the request of states, CDC field teams have deployed to ten states and are providing remote technical assistance to other states to assist with COVID-19 outbreaks in food industries. CDC is also providing technical assistance to states in other ways to address outbreaks of illness among workers at meat and poultry processing facilities. For example, CDC has held webinars and town hall meetings with industry and trade group stakeholders and teleconferences with local and state partners. CDC and its National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) will continue to help the food processing industry and their workers, as well as state and local public health officials working in Iowa and around the United States, in the implementation of measures to minimize the impact of COVID-19.

CDC has also issued general worker guidance that is applicable to workers at meat and poultry processing facilities: *Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to COVID-19* (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html) and the guidance *Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May Have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19* (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/critical-workers/implementing-safety-practices.html>).

Employees can best protect themselves and others from COVID-19 by limiting face-to-face contact. While limiting face-to-face contact with others is the best way to reduce the spread of COVID-19, CDC agrees that sometimes this is not feasible for certain workers and could be especially challenging in the meat packing industry.

CDC recommends that employers and workers in all industries use other strategies listed within the *Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to COVID-19* to limit

transmission of infections amongst workers and customers, such as the use of appropriate personal protective equipment, practicing good hand hygiene, and improved cleaning and disinfection of surfaces and equipment used by customers and other workers (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html). These guidelines are especially important for workers with underlying conditions that put them at greater risk for severe disease, including older adults and people who have severe underlying chronic medical conditions.

As you know, while CDC experts are focused on addressing this unprecedented public health emergency, we understand that you and your constituents have ongoing concerns about COVID-19 and have questions that deserve answers. CDC and its federal partners are providing regular briefings for Congressional members and staff to keep policy makers informed on these rapidly evolving developments. In addition, the CDC Washington Office is sending daily updates to Congressional staff with case counts and information about new guidance for key stakeholders and other important updates. Please contact Anstice Brand Kenefick in our CDC Washington Office at (202) 245-0600 or abrand@cdc.gov if you have further questions.

Thank you, again, for your dedication to the American people and for your interest in this ongoing response. Please know that we share your concerns and are taking every action to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 among these essential workers, in their workplaces, and in the surrounding communities. We appreciate your support, and that of Congress, as we all work together in the face of this pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert R. Redfield MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert Redfield, MD
Director