



March 18, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Democrat Leader  
United States Senate  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer & Leader McCarthy:

There are over 152,000 convenience stores in the United States who are currently providing 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. Our industry sells over 80% of the retail fuel in the United States, we are America's gas station. 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 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.

These businesses range in size from single store operators to large companies. Many are facing significant financial hardship in the days and weeks ahead as Americans heed the call from public health officials to stay home. Roughly 62% of the 152,000 stores in the industry are single store operators who will now shoulder the financial burden of paid time off for their employees. While we recognize that some funds are available for reimbursement in the form of federal tax credits, employers may need to wait months to access that money and many may not be able to wait that long and stay in business. The industry also includes a significant number of businesses with more than 500 employees that will voluntarily provide paid time off but without access to the tax credits. They also will be ineligible for the expanded small businesses loans that have been proposed as part of the next stimulus package.

All of these companies, regardless of size, are going to continue to provide essential services to their communities for as long as they are financially able. They need access to capital markets or other direct financial assistance to ensure they are able to do so. Without such assistance we are likely to see understaffed stores or restricted hours if not complete closures of businesses which are often at the hearts of their communities.

Some suggestions that would be helpful for businesses of all sizes:

- Funds made available for businesses negatively affected by the crisis should be available to all industries.
- The federal government should provide federally backed business interruption insurance.
- Business loan funds should be made available for business of all sizes.
- Any business, regardless of size, deemed to be an essential business by the federal government should have access to the tax credits provided under the Family First Coronavirus Response Act if they provide new or expanded paid time off for their employees in response to this crisis.

- The Treasury department should allow employers to give employees the option to cash-out their accrued vacation days without the employees or employers facing any tax penalties, including those for nonqualified accrual of compensation.
- Businesses should be allowed to carry back losses sustained this year to past tax years.
- The tax code should be amended to allow accelerated depreciation of assets.

We must ensure that America's convenience stores are able to continue operating and providing essential support to our first responders, health care workers and all others who are truly on the front lines of fighting this global pandemic here in the United States. These suggestions would go a long way toward ensuring that they can continue to serve their communities during these trying times.

Sincerely,  
  
Lyle Beckwith  
Senior Vice President  
Government Relations  
NACS