

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 24, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy,

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has long been the principal government authority ensuring the health and safety of millions of hardworking men and women. When new workplace safety concerns arise, OSHA has upgraded and adapted their guidelines and standards to address these new issues. Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we are now facing an unprecedented workplace safety crisis. Essential workers continue to show up to work, bravely clocking in each day so that those of us who cannot are able to continue life as normally as possible during this crisis, and we need to be doing all we can to ensure their safety.

This is why we strongly urge you to include language directing OSHA to issue an emergency temporary standard followed by permanent guidance and standards for worker safety and health, not only during this pandemic, but for the future as well. When the economy does begin to reopen, it will be vital for those returning to work have adequate protections. In our home state of Michigan, thousands of manufacturing workers will return to work at large, complex facilities while thousands more will return to work at smaller firms stretching limited resources to reopen.

There are serious questions for workers surrounding their safety and sanitation of their workplace, which requires a crew with deep understanding of how to rid a plant of contagions like COVID-19. When workers do return, they need a full understanding of the deep cleaning protocol, if masks are required, a necessary supply of hand sanitizer, how to ensure no one who is COVID-19 positive is able to return to work until they pose no risk to others and ways to get the testing that is so needed to achieve this. That is why it is so vital OSHA issue guidance and standards because every worker must be able to know that they are returning to a safe and healthy work environment.

This is a transformative event for workplace safety, and our laws and regulations must transform as well. We cannot ask workers to make the impossible choice between not reporting to work and potentially losing their job or working in an unsafe environment, risking exposure to this deadly virus.

Early response efforts like social distancing and proper protective equipment decrease the spread of a contagion dramatically. Setting a standard for workplace safety would reduce the likelihood that workers contract any virus or contagion and would also reduce the transmission, therefore

helping us flatten the curve. The days and weeks it took to create and implement individual workplace safety practices potentially let this virus spread unencumbered, leaving workers, their families and communities exposed. We cannot risk that happening again.

Creating guidelines and a standard for workplace safety now will give workers the peace of mind and companies a valuable and *timely* blueprint on how to either continue their essential operations or re-open facilities while protecting their workforce and communities. Voluntary practices have their place, but a global pandemic is not one of them.

Sincerely,


Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress


Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

ADDITIONAL SIGNATORIES:

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