



March 22, 2020

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia
Virginia State Capitol
Richmond, VA

RE: Virginia Construction Industry and COVID-19

Dear Governor Northam:

Thank you for your efforts during this current public health crisis. We recognize and sincerely appreciate your leadership and the work of your staff and those who are spending every hour to keep Virginians safe during this time. You have always understood the importance of construction to the state's economy and we hope you will recognize the need to continue in a safe manner that follows best practices and implements the OSHA guidelines.

Members of the Virginia construction industry are committed to the health, safety and welfare of our workforce and the public. The undersigned organizations represent many of the general contractors, specialty contractors and suppliers that employ the more than 450,000 Virginians who work in the construction industry. We write to you today to ask you to treat construction as an essential service for the state and refrain from any action to curtail ongoing construction projects. As higher risk industries are being impacted by the spread of COVID-19, it is more important to the long-term health of Virginia' economy to keep the construction industry intact.

Based on input from the CDC, OSHA has developed a hierarchy of industry risk for COVID-19. The lowest risk industries are those with workers that have "minimal occupational contact with the public and other coworkers." Construction jobsites are not densely populated work areas. Construction sites are a unique workplace with their own levels of "social distancing" built in. Many workers are segregated completely or separated by large distances. Access to jobsites is strictly controlled with the public kept out. Additionally, safety briefings are already part of the construction industry culture, and with the additional guidelines developed by OSHA to address COVID-19, briefings include the extra precautions recommended by the CDC and OSHA.

The impact of shutting down construction work in Virginia will severely impact the construction of critical infrastructure and housing. Worker layoffs will make it extremely difficult for construction companies to meet the demand to maintain existing healthcare facilities and build new ones, retrofit existing buildings for emergency use and provide new transportation corridors for people and materials. Moreover, such a hit to the construction industry workforce in Virginia will undermine current and future efforts of recovery due to natural disasters. A virus pandemic does not halt hurricanes, tornadoes or floods.

Our associations have encouraged all of our members to implement strict measures for the safety of their workers and the public during this pandemic. We've distributed OSHA 3990-03 guidance on preparing the workplace in light of COVID-19 and encouraged worker education. In addition, we have encouraged all our members to donate any PPE's that they have in their supply to support our health care industry. With the low risk nature of construction related to the virus and the existing heavy emphasis on safety in our industry to implement protections for workers and the public, we urge you to recognize construction as essential services that should be continued during this time.

Sincerely,

Patrick Dean
Associated Builders & Contractors

Gordon Dixon
Associated General Contractors

Vanessa Patterson
**Richmond Area
Municipal Contractors
Association**

Craig Toalson
**Home Builders Association of
Virginia**

Ken Harrison
**Heavy Construction
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**Virginia Ready Mixed Concrete
Association**