UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

March 27, 2020

THE ADMINISTRATOR

Dear Governor:

I want to thank you for your efforts to protect the health of your citizens during these challenging times and personally offer the support of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to further our shared mission of protecting all Americans. EPA's core charge of protecting human health and the environment includes combating Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) together with our state partners. **Ensuring that drinking water and wastewater services are fully operational is critical to containing COVID-19 and protecting Americans from other public health risks.** Handwashing and cleaning depend on providing safe and reliable drinking water and effective treatment of wastewater.

In response to the Presidential Declaration of a National Emergency for the COVID-19 outbreak, I am writing to you to request that water and wastewater workers, as well as the manufacturers and suppliers who provide vital services and materials to the water sector, are considered essential workers and businesses by state authorities when enacting restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19. Our critical infrastructure and the operators who ensure the safe supply of water to our homes and hospitals depend on treatment chemicals, laboratory supplies and related goods and materials.

On March 16, 2020, the President issued *Coronavirus Guidelines for America,* which states "[i]f you work in a critical infrastructure industry, as defined by the Department of Homeland Security … you have a special responsibility to maintain your normal work schedule."[1] Following this guidance, on March 19, 2020, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency released *Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce: Ensuring Community and National Resilience in COVID-19 Response*. The DHS guidance specifically recognizes water and wastewater workers and suppliers to the water sector (e.g., chemical manufacturers and delivery services) as essential critical infrastructure workers. This guidance and additional information on resources that water stakeholders can use to support operations during the pandemic can be found at www.epa.gov/coronavirus.

We strongly encourage state and local authorities to consult this guidance when issuing implementation directives regarding essential workers. It is crucial to community resilience and

[1] White House (2020). The President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America. p 1. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/03.16.20_coronavirus-guidance_8.5x11_315PM.pdf

continuity of essential functions to enable such workers and businesses to continue to work during periods of community restriction, access management, social distancing, or closure orders and directives. I urge your state and the communities within your state to ensure that these workers and businesses receive the access, credentials, and essential status necessary to sustain our nation's critical infrastructure.

Thank you for your efforts to contain and minimize the spread of COVID-19. We are dedicated to working closely with you to ensure the safety of the workforce and the continued operation of water and wastewater services in support of our nation's public health and safety. Please do not hesitate to contact me, or your staff may contact Britt Carter, EPA's Assistant Deputy Associate Administrator for Intergovernmental Relations, at carter.brittanys@epa.gov or 202-564-6312.

Sincerely,

Andrew R. Wheeler