



February 12, 2021

Governor Janet Mills
 1 State House Station
 Augusta, ME 04333

Re: Prioritization of Maine’s Food and Agriculture frontline workforce in phase 1b COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

Dear Governor Mills and Commissioner Lambrew,
 cc: Commissioner Johnson and Commissioner Beal

On behalf of the Maine’s food and beverage manufacturers, agriculture and aquaculture industry, food retailers and distribution partners, thank you for your leadership in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We greatly appreciate the steps your administration has taken to keep Mainers safe as well as your tireless efforts to plan for the distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccines, as laid out in *Maine’s COVID-19 Interim Draft Vaccination Plan*. We strongly support the draft plan’s prioritization of food and agriculture critical front-line workers, including migrant and seasonal workers, after the Phase 1 initial allocations targeting healthcare workers, elderly Mainers, and those most at-risk from coronavirus.

As you know, in order to keep the food supply chain running and Americans nourished during the ongoing health crisis, the federal government designated the food and agriculture sector as part of the nation’s critical infrastructure in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce. As a result, the food industry has continued, bolstered, and at times shifted operations to ensure families could access our products and stay safe. Our sector has continued to work throughout the duration of the pandemic, and we are all grateful for their hard work and dedication.

It is imperative that food and beverage manufacturers, the agriculture and aquaculture industry, food retailers and our distribution partners continue to operate as part of critical infrastructure to ensure a safe and readily available food supply. We must ensure that our food supply operates uninterrupted, and we can only do so by ensuring these employees, both seasonal and full time, permanent or temporary residents, are protected.

Maine’s food system accounts for 13.3% of Maine’s employment sector and we respectfully request that Maine’s vaccination plan continues to prioritizes food industry workers for vaccinations behind healthcare workers and high-risk populations consistent with both the *CDC’s COVID-19 Vaccination Program Interim Playbook* and the *National Academies of Sciences’ final framework for COVID-19 vaccines allocation*. Again, thank you for your leadership, and we appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Maine Aquaculture Association
 Maine Beverage Association
 Maine Dairy Industry Association

Maine Farm Bureau Association
 Maine Grocers & Food Producers Association
 Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association

Maine Potato Board
 Maine Sustainable Ag Society
 Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine