



The Honorable Eric Holcomb  
The Office of the Governor  
The Indiana Statehouse  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2797

March 19, 2020

Dear Governor Holcomb:

As all Hoosiers, as well as all Americans in our proud local communities, engage aggressive efforts to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the Midwest Building Suppliers Association (MBSA), representing Indiana's 100+ lumber/building material providers with thousands of Hoosier employees, would like to bring to your attention the actual flow of business of a typical building material dealer, especially in light of recent conversations of suspension of operations of "non-essential retailers" in the state. It is our position that the dealers and their products *are* in fact essential, and their operations do not pose the human contact threat that limiting customer contact in a typical "store" is intended to achieve.

The building material dealers are the essential supply chain to keep Indiana building homes and other structures, which keeps the economy humming. With so much devastating economic impact caused by COVID-19 in other sectors of business, it is vital to maintain – even grow – those sectors that allow business to continue, while not creating the human contact paradigm associated with a typical retail store.

Many building material dealers actually operate on a no-physical-contact transactional basis in the dealer-builder relationship, in that orders are placed online or via phone, trucks loaded with the order, and delivery driver dropping off materials at a job site staging area. All of this is done with little or no physical human contact. This business transaction scenario is virtually low-to-no risk.

Many of our members, in addition to lumber and building materials sales, also have hardware stores. We believe that the products they sell are also essential in that they are the very products needed to maintain a safe and healthy home and workplace environment, including cleaning and disinfecting supplies, refuse disposal items, and storage containers. To prevent access to these facilities could be more harmful than productive. In addition, these building materials professionals have a solid track record of volunteering and assisting their communities in times of crisis such as these.

As such, the building materials industry family here in Indiana urges all levels of government; local municipalities, the state, and the federal government to view and classify building materials providers as "essential" to the communities we serve, to our economic present, and to building the future of Indiana, and that they may continue their vital operations should more stringent retail restrictions be imposed. We thank you for your attention and consideration as you lead us through these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Murphy, CAE  
Chief Executive Officer

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