Dear President Trump, Leader McConnell, and Speaker Pelosi,

I am writing as President of the Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA). Our organization is the largest in the world serving qualitative researchers. Like so many people across the country, qualitative researchers’ businesses are suffering as a result of COVID-19. Our organization is largely made up of independent researchers. A recent survey we conducted indicated 20% of our members have experienced a complete halt in business, while another 60% have experienced a notable slowdown in volume.

Like our industry partner, the Insights Association, QRCA has advised our researchers to stop research requiring face-to-face interactions. This advice is based on an assessment of the health and safety of the research workforce and the public acceptability of continuing face-to-face research programs. We are writing in support of the letter that Melanie Courtright, CEO of the Insights Association, sent on March 24 requesting assistance for the $35 billion market research and data analytics industry. We want to reinforce the requests indicated in her letter. We welcome the initiatives already passed; however, our industry needs:

1. Extension of any potential measures aimed at supporting hospitality and leisure industries to cover our in-person businesses.
2. Relief from immediate repayment of loans to support insights businesses, especially small businesses. The enacted and proposed influx of loans are less helpful to recipients if they must commit resources to repayment over the short term even while they are not bringing in any revenue to be able to make such payments. Repayment of SBA and other government loans should be deferred at least six months and we urge you to look for ways to incentivize private lenders and creditors to arrange deferred payments.
3. A consideration of continuing support for small businesses in our industry after the crisis. Unlike the hospitality and entertainment sectors, like bars, hotels or Hollywood production studios, where demand should return rapidly, our sector will be predominantly dependent on the slower return of business confidence and projects that can take up to 6-9 months to restart.
4. Modernize or streamline regulations that impede insights work. For example, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is long overdue to issue new rules for the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA), after their 2015 rules, that made almost any call to a cell phone potentially illegal and subject to class action lawsuits (unless you use an old rotary dial phone), were rejected by a circuit court in 2017. Litigation (and potential litigation) against legitimate entities placing calls for research purposes has cost our industry millions and driven many companies and organizations to abandon the telephone as a medium.

As Ms. Courtright stated, “Marketing research and data analytics are the heart of innovation. The largest companies in the world rely on the insights we produce for product and service development, concept testing, and advertisement. As the U.S. economy rebounds from this pandemic, understanding how consumer values and sentiment have changed will be crucial to defining and serving the ‘new normal’ that will emerge.”
As qualitative researchers, we stand ready to help the U.S. government, businesses and non-profits uncover insights that can guide innovation and help our economy emerge stronger than ever. We need federal help to protect our industry and allow us to continue that vital work. Thank you for your consideration of and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Kelly Heatly
President