

December 30, 2020

The Honorable Tim Walz
Office of the Governor
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155



RE: Solid Waste and Recycling Sector COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization

Dear Governor Walz,

The Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM) and the Minnesota Chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) request that the State of Minnesota include the recycling and waste industry as a part of its vaccine distribution to essential workers. The Federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that essential workers should be prioritized to receive a COVID-19 vaccine after it is administered to healthcare workers. Reports indicate that states have primary responsibility for carrying this out and establishing prioritization.

RAM is the state's lead organization for recycling by providing leadership, advocacy, and education to encourage the responsible use of resources through recycling and supporting modes of waste reduction. Comprised of both public and private representation, RAM has a diverse membership of over 200 members located throughout the State of Minnesota. The collection, processing, and marketing of recycling impacts all healthcare, residential, commercial, and industrial sectors daily.

SWANA is the world's largest professional association of solid waste industry professionals (more than 10,000 members), which represents hundreds of thousands of men and women in the solid waste and recycling industry. SWANA's Minnesota Chapter represent more than 100 of those SWANA professionals, working for state and local governments, as well as privately owned waste and recycling companies.

During this national emergency, recycling and waste workers have been classified by the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) as "essential" and are listed under five different "Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers" headings in the CISA 4.0 guidelines: 1. Healthcare/Public Health, 2. Critical Manufacturing, 3. Public Works and Infrastructure Support Services, 4. Hazardous Materials, and 5. Transportation and Logistics.

Since the beginning of the pandemic in March, recycling and waste services are as important as ever due to stay-at-home orders, the increase in items shipped to resident's homes, and the increased use of PPE. Recycling and solid waste generation has remained consistent throughout the pandemic; however, the make-up and origin of the waste has shifted slightly. The recycling and solid waste sector are comprised of companies and municipal agencies that collectively employ thousands of men and women who collect, process, and market recycling in Minnesota. These people are on the front line of managing recycling and waste in an industry that is already listed as one of the top 10 most dangerous jobs in the country. COVID-19 only exacerbates the dangers that are faced by these employees.

Our recycling and waste workers just experienced their busiest and likely most dangerous year of work yet. Without daily recycling and waste collection and processing, our state would quickly notice the backup of solid waste, which could lead to another public health crisis that we certainly cannot afford to

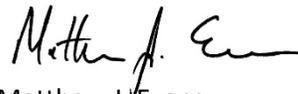
have now. The waste and recycling industry provides a critical service essential for society to function – with or without a pandemic. We cannot afford to lose any of our recycling and solid waste workers to COVID-19 or a mandatory quarantine.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and taking the time to review our request that the State of Minnesota include the recycling and waste industry as a part of its vaccine distribution to essential workers. Please contact RAM's Executive Director, Lori Nelson, lori@reycleminnesota.org, RAM's Board Chair, Michael Reed, Michael.reed@co.ramsey.mn.us, or SWANA's Chapter President, Matt Evans, maevans@burnsmcd.com, to discuss this issue or if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Lori Nelson
Executive Director, Recycling Association of Minnesota



Matthew J. Evans
President, Minnesota Chapter of SWANA