March 16, 2020

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Vice President Mike Pence  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
H-232 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
Room S-221, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear President Trump, Vice President Pence, Speaker Pelosi, and Majority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of America’s heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration (HVACR) contractors, we ask that you take action and consider improvements to H.R. 6201, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Our recommendations will ensure that America’s HVACR professionals can continue to provide essential services to the American people.

The Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA) represents nearly 60,000 HVACR professionals across the U.S. HVACR contractors are a backbone of the economy, responsible for ensuring modern medicine is possible, ensuring information technology centers are operational, maintaining a fresh supply of food, and providing essential comfort for nearly every hospital, office building, and home in the country. HVACR contractors provide more than comfort, they provide essential services that our economy depends upon and ACCA is the premier trade association representing this pillar of the economy.

We are concerned about the leave mandates in H.R. 6201 that would require businesses to provide paid leave to their workers. This mandate presumes that HVACR contractors have enough liquidity or cash reserves to persevere the economic hardships they could be facing. This year many HVACR contractors are already operating on lines of credit because the mild winter we experienced saw fewer breakdowns of heating equipment, therefore required less repair or replacement work. Although H.R. 6201 includes tax credits and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin has promised to advance businesses money, credits will not produce sufficient liquidity in time. We fear the government does not have the infrastructure and businesses do not have the administrative resources to access these advances in the time needed to deter business closures.

Rather than mandating paid leave, which could force many small and medium businesses to close, ACCA supports immediate action from the federal government that would encourage states to loosen restrictions on the ability to use unemployment. ACCA supports states that have already taken action to expand their unemployment insurance and loosen restrictions on the use of these benefits. The federal government could also provide additional funding to states that may experience shortfalls in their unemployment accounts.

THE ESSENTIAL PARTNER FOR CONTRACTOR EXCELLENCE
Unlike mandated paid leave, which contractors have not budgeted for, HVACR contractors have budgeted for unemployment insurance and have already paid into those accounts. Considering that unemployment has been at an historic low, those accounts should be well funded, and we believe that would enable HVACR contractors survive some very challenging times.

In addition to addressing our concerns related to mandated leave, ACCA also supports many of the recommendations provided by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. As a member of the U.S. Chamber Task Force on Coronavirus Response, ACCA has helped craft recommendations on how to support small and medium sized businesses, especially HVACR contractors. We support the Chamber’s recommendations provided in its March 16, 2020 letter, including the swift enactment of loan programs for small businesses, the creation of credit facilities and loan guarantees, tax deductions for employers who invest in safety and sanitation equipment, protections for employers from frivolous litigation, and enactment of legislation that would allow companies to use tax losses related to health emergencies to offset prior year income.

ACCA also requests that you exempt HVACR contractors from any mandates that require businesses to temporarily close or individuals to self-isolate. HVACR contractors should be considered emergency service providers because they perform necessary, life-saving services on several components of our nation’s most critical infrastructure. This includes, but is not limited to, the healthcare industry, the agri-food supply chain, cooling for data and information technology centers, and essential heating, cooling, and refrigeration needs for vulnerable populations.

If our contractors do not have the necessary labor to service the HVACR systems at vital sites like hospitals, labs, pharmacies, grocery stores, and food warehouses, among other places where lives, safety, and economic wellbeing are all at stake, the consequences could be catastrophic. Imagine a hospital, overwhelmed with patients suffering from the Coronavirus, and the mechanical systems breakdown. Failure to provide ventilation needs and maintain indoor air quality would mean certain death for many.

Please recognize that much like our nation’s healthcare providers, the work HVACR contractors do is more important in this moment than it has ever been.

We thank each of you for your leadership in these trying and uncertain times. If we can be of any assistance, please contact ACCA’s Vice President of Public Policy & Industry Relations, Todd Washam at todd.washam@acca.org.

Sincerely,

Barton James
President and CEO
Air Conditioning Contractors of America