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*We know that as a Home Furnishings Association member you sell many products that are essential to your customers’ daily lives and needs, especially when so many Americans must remain at home. Yet, we also know that you face a bewildering assortment of stay-at-home directives with exceptions for “essential businesses.” Some of your stores are closed, some are still operating. In either case you might want to make it clear to state and local leaders why your business should be counted as essential. We have made that argument to Vice President Mike Pence, head of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, in a joint letter from HFA and the American Home Furnishings Alliance.*

*The letter below could help you frame a message to your state and local leaders that when businesses are allowed to ramp back up, your store is an essential part of that process. If you are still operating at any level, this letter could help you make the case that you should remain open. It’s up to you. HFA wants to support your approach in both cases.*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

The health and safety of employees, customers and families is the top priority for the essential home furnishings industry. We appreciate your leadership to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, both in terms of public health as well as the broader economic implications. We also greatly appreciate the work of the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to provide uniform guidance to state and local governments through its March 19, 2020, and March 28, 2020, memorandums. However, the essential operations of the home furnishings industry are not clearly acknowledged in these memorandums. This has led to confusion within the industry and cease and desist orders in certain locales.

As a result, an advantage has inadvertently been created by acknowledging certain businesses as essential. Big Box Stores and Online retailers remain open because they sell “essential” items such as over the counter medication, food, hardware, and appliances. However, these retailers are not limited to selling products deemed essential. They are selling and shipping home furnishings nationwide while home furnishings retailers are left with uncertainty and dire business consequences.

**Staying at home is essential to defeating COVID-19 and home furnishings are essential for staying at home.**

* With little to no warning, Americans have been directed to work from home. Many find themselves in ill-equipped spaces that hamper their productivity. Some companies may change their business model following the pandemic to enable employees to work partially or entirely from home on a permanent basis.
* `With little to no warning, many families are attempting to home-school children. Many households lack furnishings to create basic workspaces.
* Assisted living facilities are sending elderly patients to their families as a precaution leaving those families to search for beds, chairs and other necessary furnishings to provide proper care.
* College students are home taking online classes. Many of these students also need the opportunity to furnish a basic workspace.
* Families have more furnishings needs, both indoors and outdoors, as a result of the stay-at-home orders.

* Enabling families to meet their home furnishings needs while confined to their homes will make them more inclined to follow stay-at-home orders for work and leisure activities.
* Stress caused by stay-at-home orders, home schooling children, job loss, economic uncertainty and separation from loved ones causes poor and inadequate sleep. Under the best circumstances, poor sleep leads to other health issues. Americans need the opportunity to improve their bedding, which can dramatically improve sleep quality, if they deem this necessary and beneficial.
* Quality sleep also improves Americans’ ability to fight illness. Further, enhancements like power bases that allow the user to adjust their sleep surface are shown to lessen shortness of breath, help alleviate heart congestion and inflammation, increase blood flow and reduce snoring and sleep apnea.
* In homes where someone has already become ill, there may be a need for mattress and pillow protectors – items sold by mattress specialty stores – to provide a safe and hygienic place to rest.

Along with the Home Furnishings Association and on behalf of the nearly 1.5 million home furnishings related employees nationwide we respectfully ask for your help to clearly acknowledge the essential nature of home furnishings retailers and the home furnishings supply chain necessary to meet product demand.

Home furnishings retailers are diligently investing considerable resources and effort into following CDC guidance. In any of our facilities that are still open, we are routinely cleaning and sanitizing. We will always take necessary steps to insure a safe environment for both our employees and customers.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns and for your ongoing leadership. We are ready to work with you to assist as you consider how to best safeguard our communities while serving their needs in this crisis.

Sincerely,

Name & Phone Number