March 21, 2020

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

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing all sectors of the retail community, and many of the businesses their operations support, we want to applaud your administration and Congress for taking swift action to address the health and safety issues from the Coronavirus as well as the overall impact on the U.S. economy. Retail is the largest private-sector employer, with 52 million workers — fully 1 in 4 U.S. workers — directly or indirectly employed in retail and related businesses, such as manufacturing, design and logistics.

The economic harm from social distancing and mandatory store closures is real. Layoffs and economic hardship will surely follow, particularly for smaller, specialty retailers and brands. The biggest single issue facing the industry right now is liquidity, and federal stimulus efforts must be swift and flexible enough to address the urgent need for access to credit to keep these businesses afloat.

Research from the National Retail Federation initially predicts the U.S. retail sector could see a reduction of 20% or more in retail sales over a period of three months, based on similar declines in China. A 20% reduction in sales over a 3-month period would result in a total estimated loss of $429.9 billion when considering both direct and indirect sales. Most notably, this sharp decline in retail activity would place 1.7 million American jobs in peril. Of course, with the virus continuing to spread and economic damage being compounded, lost retail sales could climb much higher — between 50% and 80% in some sectors — with even more American jobs jeopardized. Unless immediate steps are taken, these dire economic outcomes could persist for many months.

The economic stimulus packages that are being considered must address the concerns of all different kinds and sizes of retail business, including their suppliers. While some retail businesses may be considered “essential” and may be able to remain open, many will not. It is important that the stimulus package provide a bridge, not a bailout, that is flexible enough for retailers and related suppliers of any size to take advantage.

Retailers are not only the bedrock of the U.S economy, but also support many supply chains throughout the U.S. and the local communities they serve. Our collective members are working to ensure the health and safety of their employees, supply chain partners and customers first and foremost. We want to make sure these companies are able to continue operations when we eventually get through this crisis.
We thank you for your ongoing efforts and stand ready to work with you for swift passage on these packages.

Accessories Council
Alabama Retail Association
Alliance of Wisconsin Retailers
American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA)
American Bridal & Prom Industry Association (ABPIA)
American Down and Feather Council
American Home Furnishings Alliance
Arizona Retailers Association
Arkansas Grocery and Retail Association
California Retailers Association
Carolinias Food Industry Council
Colorado Retail Council
Connecticut Retail Merchants Association
Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA)
Fashion Accessories Shippers Association
Fashion Jewelry & Accessories Trade Association
FFANY | Fashion Footwear Association of New York
Florida Retail Federation
FMI - The Food Industry Association
Footwear Distributors & Retailers of America (FDRA)
Gemini Shippers Association
Georgia Retailers
Greeting Card Association
Halloween Industry Association
Home Fashion Products Association
Home Furnishings Association
Idaho Retailers Association
Illinois Retail Merchants Association
Independent Office Products Alliance
Indiana Retail Council
International Housewares Association
Iowa Retail Federation
Jewelers of America
Jewelry Vigilance Committee
Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association
Kentucky Retail Federation
Louisiana Retailers Association
Maryland Retailers Association
Maryland Association of Chain Drug Stores
Michigan Retailers Association
Minnesota Retailers Association
Missouri Retailers Association
Montana Retail Association
National Association of Chain Drug Stores
National Confectioners Association
National Association of Music Merchants
National Office Products Alliance
National Retail Federation
National Ski & Snowboard Retailers (NSSRA)
National Sporting Goods Association
Nebraska Retail Federation
New Hampshire Retail Association
New Jersey Retail Merchants Association
New Mexico Retail Association
North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA)
North Carolina Retail Merchants Association
Ohio Council of Retail Merchants
Oklahoma Retail Merchants Association
Oregon Business & Industry
Outdoor Industry Association
Pennsylvania Retailers’ Association
Pet Industry Distributors Association
Pet Food Institute
Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council
Retail Association of Maine
Retail Association of Nevada
Retail Council of New York State
Retail Industry Leaders Association
Retail Merchants of Hawaii
Retailers Association of Massachusetts
Snowsports Industries America
South Carolina Retail Association
South Dakota Retailers Association
Tennessee Retail Association
Texas Retailers Association
The Maryland Food Industry Council
The Toy Association
The Vision Council
Travel Goods Association (TGA)
Tri State Jewelers Association  Virginia Retail Merchants Association
United States Fashion Industry Association  Washington Retail Association
Utah Retail Merchants Association  West Virginia Retailers Association
Vermont Retail & Grocers Association  Women's Jewelry Association
Virginia Retail Federation  World Pet Association

CC:   House Speaker Nancy Pelosi
      Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
      House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
      Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer