

June 8, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the 1.8 million, mostly rural jobs directly and indirectly supported by the hardwood industry, we, the members of the Hardwood Federation, write to urge you to legislate policy proposals to support the wood products sector of the U.S. economy during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The U.S. hardwood industry is a fully integrated industry from logging to manufacturing finished consumer goods including flooring, cabinets, and moldings. The tissue and paper supplies made of residual chips and dust from our mills and the industrial mats, shipping pallets and railway ties made from hardwood lumber are crucial to the significant economic recovery we face.

Like so many American industry sectors, we have been hit hard by the devastation caused by the COVID-19 virus, with many companies reporting declines of 50% and more. Coming so closely on the heels of the the significant harm done to our companies as a result of the U.S.-China trade dispute, many are seriously concerned about their future viability.

We appreciate the financial support the U.S. government has already extended to businesses in response to the ongoing economic devastation of the COVID-19 virus. Our status as a federally recognized essential industry and the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) have been especially helpful to many of us in the U.S. hardwood industry as we struggle to remain operational. As the Senate prepares to debate additional federal economic assistance programs, we recommend the addition of the following measures be included in future assistance packages:

- Extend liability protections to businesses bringing workers back post-COVID-19;
- Direct the Small Business Administration to reverse its decision to limit Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) to \$150,000. Existing law authorizes EIDL loans of up to \$2 million which is essential to industry members;
- Extend a sustainable building tax credit to building and construction projects, including U.S. wood products used in these projects;
- Increase government purchases of U.S. wood products, including structural and finished products, for federal building and transportation projects;

- Fund necessary research to approve increased use of U.S. hardwoods in U.S. military truck beds, replacing imported tropical woods;
- Provide funding to research to increase domestic and international consumer demand for U.S. hardwood products including the environmental and home health benefits of hardwood product use.

Thank you for your attention to this distressing situation. The industry welcomes the opportunity to work with Congress and the Administration to implement measures that will sustain the U.S. hardwood industry through these troubled times. Please feel free to contact any member of the Board or Hardwood Federation Executive Director Dana Lee Cole at (202) 463-2705.

Sincerely,

The Hardwood Federation Board of Directors

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CC: Senate Appropriations Committee
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