

Relief From the COVID-19 Pandemic: Top Priorities for the Food Industry

Limited Liability Relief

There is nothing more important to ensuring that our businesses can stay open and focused on the needs of our customers and our country rather than fighting needless litigation. Liability relief legislation that is being considered is critical and needs to be passed by Congress and signed into law.

Tax Relief for Essential Workers

Those associates who are part of the essential workforce, have continued to work throughout this emergency initially encountering tremendous volume and stressed out customers. Providing payroll tax relief and income tax relief in appreciation for those initial efforts, particularly for those on the lower end of the payroll spectrum, would be well-received by the associates and the population they helped.

Extend SNAP Federal Feeding Programs to Quickly Respond to Demand

Many families were unexpectedly forced into food insecurity either by loss of a job, a reduction in wages or a loss of school nutrition resources when schools closed. SNAP and P-EBT were able to target resources utilizing authorized and trained food retailers in a scalable, expedited fashion that needs to be continued.

Nationwide Waiver for WIC Substitutions of Similar Products

The next relief package should include a nationwide waiver to allow substitutions of WIC food products within the product category and stocking requirements to allow greater supply chain flexibility. (This emergency waiver authority should allow substitutions of similar items, such as 2% milk for skim milk, when availability is challenged).

Fortify the Multiemployer Pension System

The extraordinary stress this emergency has placed on our economy further heightens the extent to which our nation's pension system must be fortified to prevent collapse.

Healthy Workplace Tax Credit Needed to Remove Barriers to Preventing Spread

Businesses have expended tremendous resources – both human and financial – in order to maintain healthy workplaces and businesses. None of these expenses could have ever been contemplated or budgeted and deserve a tax credit that recognizes this contribution to our nation's public health.

ACA/Health Care Employer Mandate Safe Harbors

Regarding the Affordable Care Act employer shared responsibility mandate (Section 4980H), employers should be granted safe harbors in which employee hours worked during the COVID-19 health emergency do not count towards the 30-hour, "full-time employee" threshold. This would ensure employers are not penalized for unforeseen, rapid staffing changes and transitions that are out of their control.

Pharmacy Reforms to Ensure Patient Access

The next relief package should remove barriers that threaten pharmacies' ability to support patients, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This can be achieved by enacting much needed pharmacy DIR reform, including clawback and pharmacy performance measure reforms. Ensuring the financial strength of our nation's pharmacies in order to protect patient access to medications and other needed pharmacy services – such as immunizations – has never been more important.