



March 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Democratic Leader, United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader, United States House
H-204 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

The Pool & Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA) was formed in 2019, combining the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals (APSP) and the National Swimming Pool Foundation (NSPF). APSP, now PHTA, is the world's oldest and largest association representing swimming pool, hot tub, and spa manufacturers, distributors, manufacturers' agents, designers, builders, installers, suppliers, retailers, and service professionals. During 2017, the U.S. swimming pool and hot tub industry contributed more than \$36.5 billion and 382,000 job equivalents to the U.S. economy.

As you prepare additional relief packages that respond to the economic impact of novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis, we urge your support of the health and safety of American workers in the recreational aquatics industry. These businesses contribute to our nation's domestic manufacturing sector, and greatly support the hospitality, tourism, home improvement and retail industries. Service and management companies, retail stores, builders, manufacturers, and other pool and hot tub professionals largely depend on the spring and summer months for their company's annual revenue source. It goes without saying that mounting COVID-19 concerns can have a detrimental impact on the pool and hot tub industry, especially as we approach warmer months.

The overall economic impact of the pool and spa industry reaches far beyond the direct revenue collected from the sales of products or delivery of services. The impact also includes jobs created, the ripple effect of income earned and expended, and the assessment and collection of taxes at varying points of all transactions. Absent relief, a large number of pool construction,

retail and distribution, management and service companies as well as our U.S. manufacturers, may be forced to temporarily or permanently close their doors as a result of COVID-19.

Several companies have already been forced to lay off workers as schools, fitness facilities, and other public facilities with artificial bodies of water, across the country, shut down. Furthermore, to stem the spread of the virus, the U.S. Department of State has taken the extraordinary measure of temporarily suspending several cultural exchange and guest worker programs, such as the Summer Work and Travel (SWT) program. This vital program is often utilized by employers to staff community pools, and other aquatic recreational facilities between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

This travel ban will have lasting impact on several sectors of our industry, and we ask that any legislation put forward, now or in the future, provide targeted relief for industries such as ours that experience a “lost summer” of economic activity.

As Congress considers additional economic relief packages, we urge consideration of the following:

- ***Provide Robust no- and low-interest loan assistance.***
 - *Provide for robust funding for Small Business Association (SBA) Disaster Assistance Programs.* No- and low-interest loans through SBA are necessary for affected businesses. The terms, qualification criteria, and approval for these loans should be flexible. Further, the SBA should recognize the unique situation of seasonal employers, who have been unable to fulfill contract obligations due to travel restrictions or other Federal, state or local mandates that have forced certain businesses to close for COVID-19 mitigation purposes.
 - *Ensure that the terms and conditions of existing and new commercial bank loans mirror those of SBA Disaster Assistance Loans.* SBA Disaster Loans represent a critical economic lifeline for our industry, but small businesses must first exhaust access to other lines of credit.
- ***Suspend Payroll Taxes***
 - Suspending payroll taxes has been a part of different relief proposals. PHTA supports it and we believe it will help our members across the country.
- ***Expand Unemployment Insurance***
 - Make unemployment insurance available for all temporarily laid off or furloughed employees, with no long-term negative impact on employers’ insurance premiums.
 - Ensure benefits are readily available by providing an efficient application, approval, and payment process.
 - Consider relief specifically for seasonal and hourly workers that may not typically qualify for unemployment benefits.

- ***Seek the suspension of tariffs on raw materials, parts, components, chemicals and other key elements of the global supply chain.***
 - The elimination or reduction of tariffs would maintain the health of our businesses and global supply chains.

- ***Delay Tax Deadlines***
 - Extend the April 15 filing deadline and postpone estimated tax payments in order to increase the available cash flow for our members experiencing cash shortfall as a result of the COVID-19 emergency.

We understand the unprecedented pressure you are under to contain COVID-19 and mitigate its effects on American families and businesses. As Congress moves swiftly to provide economic relief, we hope you will remember the important nationwide role of our industry and our connection to other impacted sectors; including the hospitality, recreation tourism, retail industries, as well as over 12 million homeowners with our products in their backyard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sabeena Hickman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Sabeena Hickman, CAE

President & CEO