

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

April 17, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write to echo the request of America's coal miners by urging the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), the federal government's principal agency directed to prevent mine illness, injury, and death, to exercise its authority to issue emergency standards to safeguard miners as the nation continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you are well aware, coal miners are especially prone to the dangers of COVID-19 because of the nature of their work. Unlike other professions where social distancing recommendations are practicable, coal mining requires the continuous clustering of people working in close proximity of one another. Clustering usually begins in the locker rooms where miners prepare for the day's shift by putting on their protective gear. It continues when the miners climb into their mantrips, mine cars, and elevators where they are carried to the extraction sites. While there, the miners will breathe the same air, utilize the same machinery, tools, and instrumentalities to move the coal out of the mine and into the stream of commerce. Once their shifts conclude, the miners will return to the locker rooms, utilize showering facilities, and exchange orders with the next shift before heading home to their families. This process repeats itself between every shift, and at every mine, exponentially increasing the probability of exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

We understand that individual mine operators and local unions have implemented their own measures in an attempt to mitigate the risks of exposure to this highly contagious virus. However, we believe that a uniform implementation of practices detailed within an MSHA emergency standard would ensure that the highest level of precautionary measures were in place at every mine.

Coal miners are the backbone of this country; they have always risked their lives to provide the power that keeps our lights on and the energy flowing to our homes and businesses. When it comes to the coal industry, the health and safety of our miners must continue to be our top priority.

Again, we strongly urge MSHA to immediately issue the emergency standards necessary to protect our nation's miners as we work toward finding solutions to the current public health crisis. Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

/s/ Joe Manchin III

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

/s/ Sherrod Brown

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/ Robert P. Casey, Jr.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

/s/ Doug Jones

Doug Jones
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/ Mark R. Warner

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator