March 20, 2020

The White House
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Vice President Pence:

On behalf of the American Foundry Society and the more than 490,000 men and women who comprise the U.S metalcasting industry, I am writing to urge the Trump administration to identify foundries, their supply chains, and workers as “essential” when drafting and enforcing shelter-in-place orders and other directives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We appreciate the efforts of the administration to limit the spread and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. U.S. metalcasters are continuing to operate while doing everything possible to assure the health and safety of their employees, their families and their communities.

Foundries produce highly engineered metal castings made from iron, steel, and non-ferrous alloys that are integral to our critical infrastructure and virtually all U.S. manufacturing activities. In fact, castings are used to produce 90 percent of all durable goods and nearly all manufacturing machinery. Countless sectors rely upon the existence of castings, including those vital to critical infrastructure such as national defense, medical, transportation, electric power and energy generation systems, as well as our drinking water and wastewater systems. The country is depending on the many metal castings our members make—from parts for X-ray machines, operating tables and other surgical room equipment to supplying the pulp and paper making industry with cast parts which produce toilet paper, tissues and paper towels to components for trucks and vehicles needed for our nation’s first responders, to name just a few examples.

In addition, the foundry industry has the unique ability of to switch production quickly from non-essential items to essential items. Shutting down the production capacity of foundries would seriously undermine the ability of the states to respond effectively to the COVID-19 challenges.

Foundries are the mainstay of national defense. All sectors of the U.S. military rely on castings that are used for a wide range of applications. Critical castings are found in military aircraft, tanks, ships, submarines, communication systems, and components found in firearms, rifles, and machine guns. Furthermore, the Cyber and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the risk advisory body of the U.S. government, lists the iron, steel and ferro-alloy manufacturing sector as a critical manufacturing sector. Without access to a reliable source of castings during this crisis, our national and economic security will be severely impacted.
As businesses across the nation have been ordered by many state and local governments to limit or cease operations in recent days, several states, such as New Jersey, have specifically exempted industrial manufacturing as “essential.” We urge the Trump administration to provide consistent nationwide guidance by formally recognizing critical manufacturing sectors such as ours that are essential to our country’s critical infrastructure and the response to COVID-19.

As the Trump administration continues to take critical actions aimed at limiting the spread of COVID-19, we ask that foundries (ferrous and non-ferrous), their suppliers, and their workers in the U.S. be recognized as “essential” to the nation’s COVID-19 pandemic response. We also request that you encourage state, city and local governments to make the same designation.

Metalcasters are eager to continue supporting our country and our economy during this time of crisis. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Stephanie Salmon, AFS Washington representative, ssalmon@afsinc.org if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Doug Kurkul
CEO

cc: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
    Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer
    Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi
    House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy