



**AUSTIN CHAMBER**



March 20, 2020

The Honorable Sarah Eckhardt  
Travis County Judge  
700 Lavaca, Suite 2.300  
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Governor Abbott:

We are writing to urge you to heed guidance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) when considering business exemptions for shelter-in-place orders, should we need these, particularly regarding the manufacturing and information technology industries. CISA's guidelines identify both of these industries as essential to our national workforce's critical infrastructure.

Central Texas has a strong cluster of manufacturers that provide vital contributions to the healthcare industry, first responders, defense industry, and the economic wellbeing of our city, state, and nation. Local companies produce one-third of the IV bags in the United States; a critical diagnostic test for COVID-19; and advanced electronics that power communication devices, transportation equipment, and needed technology to fight this crisis.

The guidelines provided by CISA don't cover all critical needs from every industry. Therefore, we would suggest implementing a prompt waiver process for industries and products that are vital to all Americans but may not seem to be immediately covered by the guidance. Such a process should allow a business to provide evidence that they are adhering to any [guidance for businesses and employers provided by the Centers for Disease Control](#) while still providing a needed service or product. Once that evidence is provided, we hope that you would consider quickly granting that waiver from any shelter-in-place orders.

Both the manufacturing and information technology industries are vital to ensuring businesses have access to the tools they need to stay connected and continue to prosper even during this uncertain time. Additionally, both of these industries supply the healthcare workers with technology needed to operate during this public health crisis.

Again, we ask that you include our essential manufacturing and information technology industries in any list of business exemptions in the event a shelter-in-place order is initiated.

Thank you for your leadership in what is a truly unprecedented time.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Rollins, CCE  
President & CEO  
Austin Chamber of Commerce

Ed Latson  
Executive Director  
Austin Regional Manufacturers Association