

January 19, 2021

The Honorable Governor Tom Wolf
Office of the Governor
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: COVID-19 Vaccination for Critical Energy Sector Employees

Dear Governor Wolf,

The Appalachian Region Independent Power Producers Association (ARIPPA) is writing to you to express our concern that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic could cause an interruption in the production and distribution of critical energy, which is especially troubling as winter is upon us. As the state continues to develop its COVID-19 vaccination plan, Pennsylvania energy industry workers need to be a priority.

ARIPPA is a non-profit trade association representing the mine land reclamation to energy industry in Pennsylvania. Our member facilities help address the many issues associated with abandoned mine lands by combining the production of energy with the removal of polluting coal refuse piles and reclamation of the land for productive purposes. There are currently ten mine land reclamation to energy facilities located throughout the anthracite and bituminous coal regions of the Commonwealth.

While we are hopeful the vaccine will help combat the spread of the coronavirus, our members are concerned a lack of prioritization for energy sector employees in the state's vaccine distribution plan may impact their ability to maintain a sufficient healthy workforce to consistently generate electricity during critical winter months. The workers at these electric generation facilities play a vital role in keeping Pennsylvanians safe from harsh weather conditions by providing a reliable source of electricity to heat and power homes and businesses. With forecasted extreme winter weather as a result of a polar vortex, our energy infrastructure and workforce are now more important than ever.

Historically, when extreme winter weather strikes, operations at these facilities become more and more manpower intensive. We are therefore deeply concerned with the implications of a dire manpower shortage with a delay in vaccinations for energy workers. While our electric generating facility members are taking every possible precaution and following all federal and state guidelines, protocols like social distancing are at times unattainable due to the nature of the work involved in generating electricity. If an employee at such a facility were to contract the virus, power production could cease as a result of mandated self-quarantining for the infected workers and those that were in close contact. Simply replacing employees is not an option as it takes years to train qualified plant operators, mechanics, instrumentation technicians, electricians, and chemists.

We appreciate energy workers being prioritized as a sector but feel as though the process may not move quickly enough to protect these workers during the most critical time of year. These essential employees need to be a priority on the list for COVID-19 vaccines. As such, we respectfully urge you and Department of Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine to grant critical energy sector employees the opportunity to receive

vaccinations as soon as possible so that they may continue to keep the heat and lights on as they have done throughout this global pandemic.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We respect the degree of difficulty in the work you face during this process as all life is critical but hope that you can appreciate the urgent need for our industry. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cristy Sweeney".

Cristy Sweeney
Director, Finance & Public Affairs
csweeney@arippa.org

cc: Sen. David Argall
Rep. Joe Kerwin
Rep. Jerry Knowles
Rep. Tim Twardzik