



May 7, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary of Homeland Security
Office of the Secretary - MS 0525
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528-0525

The Honorable Robert Redfield, M.D.
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor
Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St., SW
Washington, DC 20472

Subject: Prioritization of Offshore Energy Workers for COVID-19 Test Kits and Equipment

Dear Secretary Azar, Acting Secretary Wolf, Director Redfield, and Director Gaynor,

As representatives of the U.S. offshore oil and gas industry, we write you to request your continued support and action for the allocation of COVID-19 test kits and equipment for workers in the offshore sector. Offshore oil and gas workers are critical infrastructure workers as defined by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. Furthermore, the approximately 25,000 workers in the U.S. offshore oil and natural gas sector have increased vulnerability to the spread of COVID-19 due to the confined working environments inherent to facilities, marine vessels, transportation services and other resources employed in offshore oil and gas drilling and production.

Continued offshore oil and gas production is critical to the energy and national security of the United States. The Gulf of Mexico is the backbone of U.S. energy, producing more than one million barrels of oil per day since 1997 and reaching record levels of two million barrels per day as recently as August 2019. Gulf oil and gas supplies are a key feedstock for Gulf Coast refineries and petrochemical plants, and Gulf natural gas supplies are a significant contributor to State of Florida's gas portfolio. Furthermore, Gulf of Mexico oil and gas production supports 342,000 jobs and generates billions of dollars in revenues annually for the federal treasury, Gulf Coast state governments, and the Land and Water Conservation

Fund – resulting in more than five billion dollars in revenues in 2019. Sustaining oil and gas development and production in the Gulf of Mexico is contingent upon maintaining a healthy workforce and mitigating against the spread of COVID-19 to offshore drilling and production facilities.

The offshore oil and gas industry has done an impressive job to date in mitigating against the spread of COVID-19 among the offshore workforce. However, the threat and risk for infection remains high at offshore facilities because of the challenges with social distancing in the confined settings of drilling rigs and production facilities, where 100 to 200 workers are in constant proximity throughout the day. With some degree of success, the industry has relied upon continuous screening and the implementation of mitigation practices. Yet, due to the asymptomatic nature of the disease, only through the widespread testing of all workers can we be assured that we are preventing the spread of COVID-19 offshore. The situation for offshore oil and gas workers is exacerbated by the high rate of infection in the State of Louisiana, which is the home or departure point for most of our workers.

We are thus writing to urge you, as the lead agencies in the federal family, to recommend and direct the allocation of COVID-19 test kits and quick response testing and analytical equipment to the offshore oil and gas community. Specifically, we are requesting the allocation of rapid, molecular, FDA-approved tests for COVID-19, such as polymerase chain reactive tests, testing machines, cartridges and software upgrades as testing technology develops. We understand the primacy for the health care sector, and we agree with the priority given to them. However, as increased numbers of test kits continue to come on-line, it is of vital importance that they are allocated to the offshore energy sector. Allocations of antibody/immunity tests to the offshore industry should also be considered so that our sector has the full suite of tools to best manage the pandemic. The offshore energy community desires to implement a robust testing program that includes the companies that support offshore operations so that the greatest level of mitigation is in place. In the end, such a program will benefit the U.S. economy as a whole by shielding an important subset of the population from the disease.

The Offshore Operators Committee has established a Medical Personnel Work Group that can serve as a resource for your agencies as you consider this request. Greg Southworth is the point of contact for that work group and he can be reached at greg@theooc.org. You may also contact Erik Milito at the National Ocean Industries Association at milito@noia.org or Lori LeBlanc at the Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association at Lori.LebLANC@lmoga.com.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Best regards,



Greg Southworth
Associate Director
Offshore Operators Committee



Erik G. Milito
President
National Ocean Industries Association



Lori LeBlanc
Vice President
Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association

cc:

The Honorable Dan Brouillette, Secretary of Energy
The Honorable David Bernhardt, Secretary of the Interior
The Honorable Scott Angelle, Director, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
Francis Brooke, Special Advisor to the President for Economic Policy
The Honorable John Bel Edwards, Governor, Louisiana
The Honorable Courtney Phillips, M.D., Secretary, Louisiana Department of Health