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TO: All United States Senators

FROM: President James Hart

SUBJECT: 2020 Metal Trades Department Lobby Day

DATE: February 23, 2020

Dear Senator:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO, is working in conjunction with the labor movement in mobilizing to protect front line workers who are combating the disease every day and millions more workers who may be exposed to the virus.

We urge the Senate to pass the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (H.R. 6201) as soon as possible. While this package is not a complete response to the crisis, it is an urgent measure that will get necessary assistance to working people facing serious health and financial risks.

H.R. 6201 will encourage working people to seek testing for infection by making the tests free for most people covered by employment-based insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid. We believe this is a crucial step to contain the spread of the virus.

Recognizing that the United States lacks adequate paid sick days or paid leave to make it possible for workers to stay home when they need to, and protect them from financial hardship, the bill mandates that workers who are sick or affected by quarantine orders receive up to 14 paid sick days and up to 12 weeks of paid leave per year. Unfortunately, hundreds of thousands of workers will not be eligible because the White House insisted on exempting large employers from this requirement. We urge Congress to broaden these provisions to protect all workers when it considers subsequent legislation to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, because the COVID-19 pandemic poses a significant risk to the economy, we need to develop and implement plans on a large scale to mitigate, if not prevent, an increasingly likely economic slowdown. However, to this end, we oppose a payroll tax cut because there are other more targeted and fairer proposals that would provide greater economic stimulus--for example, cutting the payroll tax would be of no benefit to laid off workers. Further, a payroll tax cut, as contemplated, would undermine Social Security, our nation's most important and effective family income support program.

Since the virus does not discriminate in terms of who it touches, it is critical that our overall response be as inclusive as possible, helping everyone who may be affected, regardless of their immigration status. This is a public health crisis that demands strong and decisive action, and we urge you to act without delay.