March 20, 2020

Vice President Mike Pence
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Mr. Christopher C. Krebs
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency
Office of the Director
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Vice President Pence and Director Krebs,

On behalf of the Metals Service Center Institute’s (MSCI) more than 250 member companies, which have more than 2,300 locations across North America, I write to request that our member companies remain open in the face of the growing number of “shelter in place” policies nationwide. We have read the CISA guidance on essential critical infrastructure workers and industries during COVID-19. Realizing production is energy, labor and cost intensive, a facility shutdown is not an action that is quick or easy to undertake. We appreciate that primary metals manufacturing is deemed part of the critical manufacturing sector. We would like to clarify and request that metals service centers are considered essential businesses during the “shelter in place” policies that are being established in localities and states.

Our membership is very diverse, consisting of metals service centers, primary metals producers, and others with a vested interest in the industrial metals supply chain. The companies that MSCI represents are essential businesses that supply product to hundreds of thousands of other essential businesses, including medical supply companies and the defense, aerospace, energy, food processing and equipment industries, and others in the supply chain. We estimate that, collectively, metals service centers supply the metals requirements for an estimated 300,000 downstream manufacturers, fabricators and other manufacturing intermediaries.
In our Section 232 submissions that we provided to the administration less than three years ago, we noted that, given the position of service centers and metals producers within the metals distribution chain, MSCI member company interests mirror the “national interest.” In executing its Section 232 orders, your administration agreed that our members play a vital part in this country’s economy and in the nation’s ability to carry out its essential national security functions.

I hope you will stand by that assessment during the current crisis.

Our members are committed to continuing to operate with the health and safety of industry employees, their families, and all Americans as the top priority. We are communicating to our members about the new protocols by the CDC and OSHA and look forward to further guidance from local, state, and federal authorities so they can maintain safe and secure operations while continuing to serve the country and their customers in this time of great need.

According to our latest estimates, the industry, including primary producers and metals service centers, employs more than 400,000 people paying over $30 billion in wages and generating more than $180 billion in economic impact to the United States economy. In our Section 232 submissions, we stated that service centers are the largest domestic customers of U.S. steel producing mills, purchasing more than an estimated 30 percent of all carbon and well over an estimated 50 percent of all specialty steels produced and distributed in this country. In addition, service centers represent an important outlet for domestic aluminum mills, purchasing at least 1.7 billion pounds annually of sheet, plate, foil and extruded products.

We are ready to work together to support the COVID-19 Task Force and appreciate your urgent attention to this most pressing matter. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly (bweidner@msci.org) if you or your team has questions.

Sincerely,

M. Robert Weidner, III

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President & CEO
Metals Service Center Institute