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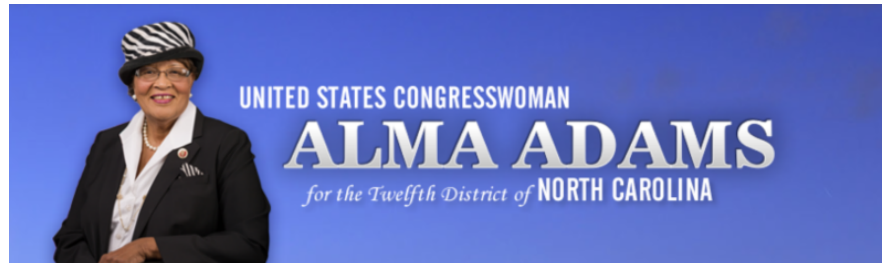
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## Congresswoman Adams Responds to Trump Executive Order

Alma Adams Press [sam.spencer@mail.house.gov]

Sent: Thursday, April 30, 2020 4:24 PM

To: Steve Johnston



## Alma Adams & Rep. DeGette Lead Letter on Trump Executive Order

“Ensuring the safety of workers in our nation’s meatpacking and food processing facilities should be of paramount importance given the ongoing pandemic”

Washington – Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D. (NC-12), Vice Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture and Chair of the House Education and Labor Committee’s Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, and Congresswoman Diana DeGette (CO-01), Chair of the House Energy and Commerce’s Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation, sent a letter to President Trump concerning this week’s executive order to activate the Defense Production Act to open meat processing plants. The letter outlines concerns “for the implications this may have for the health and safety of the workers in these plants during the ongoing pandemic.”

[A copy of the letter is available here.](#)

“Ensuring the safety of workers in our nation’s meatpacking and food processing facilities should be of paramount importance given the ongoing pandemic,” write **Congresswomen Adams and DeGette**. “Putting worker safety first is not only a moral imperative, it will also ensure that critical food stocks are able to be distributed to the American people over the long term, as well as ensure that the hard work and livelihoods of our nation’s farmers and ranchers are not put in jeopardy.”

The letter poses important questions to the Administration about the executive order.

"Given the ongoing health and safety conditions inside of these plants, we believe that your recent Executive Order requires clarification on several points:

- How will social distancing be applied and enforced on production lines and in other areas of these plants?
- Are there any mechanisms in place to ensure quick and efficient distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to workers in these plants?
- How will any interim regulations from the CDC and OSHA ensure that measures beyond social distancing are employed to ensure worker health and safety?
- How will CDC and OSHA ensure that meatpackers are abiding by existing and any future guidance related to worker safety as it relates to COVID-19?
- What steps will be taken to ensure that workers, both symptomatic and non-symptomatic, will have access to testing paid for by either the employer or the federal government?
- What guidelines and requirements will be put in place should an employee of the plant test positive, or presumptive positive for COVID-19?"

Earlier this week, [Rep. Adams leveled sharp criticisms at the Executive Order](#).

“Where’s the beef? President Trump’s executive order does nothing to protect workers,” **said Congresswoman Adams**. “Sending employees back to work with no mandatory protections in place to protect them from being exposed to COVID-19 and no recourse to address unsafe work environments threatens the lives of meat processing plant workers, as well as the long-term viability of the food supply chain. Furthermore, giving the Secretary of Agriculture authority to override state health officials makes any safety provisions in President Trump’s Executive Order vague at best and unenforceable at worst. Our workforce deserves better: mandatory life-saving PPE to protect against COVID-19, and unprecedented protections for workers. Otherwise, these conditions aren’t safe for American workers or consumers.”

“Our processing infrastructure is so important for our farmers and for our food system that we must get this right. In order to have a safe and resilient food supply chain through the COVID-19 pandemic, we must ensure that workers have the protections they need,” **concluded Adams**.

Despite promises from the Administration and disturbing reports of unsafe workplaces leading to preventable contraction of COVID-19 and, tragically, deaths, **the current executive order does not include strong safety guarantees for workers**. It relies on existing weak CDC and OSHA guidance. Earlier this month, Congresswoman Adams introduced the COVID-19 Every Worker Protection Act to require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard that establishes a legal obligation for all workplaces to implement infectious disease exposure control plans to keep workers safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. **An exposure control plan for meat processing plants could include social distancing, workstation dividers, provide masks and PPE, and paid sick leave to workers so that potentially contagious employees stay home.**

**Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.** has represented North Carolina’s 12<sup>th</sup> Congressional District (Charlotte) since 2014 and has served on the House Committee on Agriculture since 2015, where she serves as Vice Chair of the committee. Additionally, she has served on the Education & Labor Committee since 2015 and as Chair of the Workforce Protections Subcommittee since 2019.

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