



## National Letter to CDC Director Robert Redfield and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci

We, the undersigned, are writing to demand that the Centers for Disease Control retract its "Interim Guidance for Implementing Safety Practices for Critical Infrastructure Workers Who May have Had Exposure to a Person with Suspected of Confirmed COVID-19", issued on April 8.

The guidance advises that "...critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community." The CDC list of critical infrastructure workers includes janitors, housekeeping workers, workers in food and agriculture, critical manufacturing, information technology, transportation, energy, and government facilities.

The guidance makes the unfounded assumption that employers have the ability and will to systematically monitor and establish contagion prevention measures. Yet, there are currently no federal mandates for any employer to provide protection to workers: OSHA has decided not to conduct enforcement related to COVID-19 hazards in the workplace.

Permitting exposed workers to be in close contact with others contradicts the CDC's overall guidance, requiring that anyone exposed to an individual with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 self-quarantine for 14 days. The guidance threatens the health and safety of essential workers and the public, especially blue collar workers, and it undermines national and state efforts to flatten the COVID-19 curve. The significant risk of transmission from asymptomatic and presymptomatic individuals is well established. Workers in food processing, agriculture, janitorial, and many other critical industries are disproportionately workers of color, who are underpaid and already at increased risk of serious complications if they become infected with coronavirus. Recent news reports document the disproportionate incidence of COVID-19 in communities and populations of color, largely due to inequality in income, wealth, health services, and internet and information access. The CDC guidance will deepen the health inequalities that are being worsened by COVID-19.

What's needed instead are critical safety and health protections, guaranteed paid sick leave for all workers in these sectors, a presumption that infection occurred at work so that the workers are eligible for workers 'compensation protections and benefits, and epidemiological surveillance of workplace incidence of COVID-19 infection.

We demand that the CDC retract this guidance and establish priority measures that protect the economy by protecting workers rather than corporations. We cannot risk creating a new surge of infections in an effort that clearly is aimed to present the illusion that the pandemic is over and everything is back to normal. It is not. In fact, we need to strengthen protections for all essential workers immediately to protect both workers and the general public.

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