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Dear Policymakers,

The Maine Landscape & Nursery Association represents member businesses throughout Maine's green industry. I have previously communicated to you about our greenhouse growers. MELNA has significantly more member companies that specialize in lawn care, landscape maintenance, tree care, irrigation, and water management. Landscape professionals work daily throughout the Nation servicing homes and businesses to maintain their landscapes, sustain the environment, and take pride in our communities by enhancing and maintaining healthy green spaces.

As a Nation, we are all struggling to combat the rapid transmission of the coronavirus "COVID-19," and we understand and acknowledge that in some instances, drastic steps are being taken, including shutting down businesses deemed non-essential. We are communicating with you today to assure you that landscape services are essential services and must continue during any emergency declaration or quarantine scenario. Landscapers are partners during this critical time in assisting in the protection of public health and public safety. Without the landscape industry conducting these valuable services, we will undoubtedly see increased instances where people may be harmed or become sick from other illnesses compounding our already stretched medical resources.

Recently, Counties in and around the greater San Francisco metropolitan area enacted a temporary "lockdown." We anticipate other municipalities and states to take similar precautionary steps. The "lockdown" issued by these counties exempt "essential services," pertinent for the landscape industry is the below portion of the exemption:

ix. Plumbers, electricians, exterminators, and other service providers who provide services that are necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences, Essential Activities, and Essential Businesses

For the foregoing reasons, landscape services should be deemed "essential."

Landscapers are protectors of public health performing essential treatments to lawns and green spaces to reduce the transmission of dangerous and deadly diseases through pests like mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas.

Landscapers protect property and maintain greenspaces that could otherwise jeopardize public safety. Unkept fields and green spaces increase the chance of injuries. Crime rates are increased in areas where green spaces are not maintained. Tree removal is also a critical function of our industry to avoid damaging homes and their families.

Landscapers play a critical role in boosting morale and mental health during a difficult time for our Nation. Without landscape services fields, parks, businesses, and homes will become overgrown and unkempt, which can have dramatic psychological effects on the mental and well-being of our citizenry and communities.

Spring is a critical time of year for our industry due to the abundance of growth in the spring that requires prompt maintenance and care. Any halt or delay in landscape services during this time of year only magnifies potential safety problems and become much more difficult to maintain later in the year.

Lastly, our industry is taking aggressive steps within our organizations to stop the transmission of COVID-19. Because our industry functions outside this greatly reduces the chances to come into contact with other individuals. Within the industry, strong policies are being put in place to maintain social distancing with both clients and within our teams that are working in the field. We are all in this together, and the Landscape industry stands with our public officials to stop the rapid transmission of COVID-19 while also continuing to perform those essential functions that are necessary within our communities throughout the Nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald F. Sproul". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "D".

Donald F. Sproul
Executive Director
Maine Landscape & Nursery Association