

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1304

July 27, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

I write to inquire about the EPA's strategies for reopening facilities that have been closed due to COVID-19, and its plans for resuming operations. I ask that the EPA—whose very mission is to protect human health—works to ensure that any effort to reopen facilities will be done so at an appropriate time, based on scientific data, and will incorporate a clear and comprehensive operations plan to protect employees and their families.

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated many challenges to the global and national workforce, including many within federal agencies like yours. Amidst these challenges, we mourn the loss of over 140,000 Americans that have died from COVID-19. Tragically, this death rate continues to rise. The EPA is not immune to these workforce issues, or to this pandemic, and it has already experienced this devastation first-hand. Many EPA employees have contracted the virus, and one has died.

As the EPA continues to develop reopening plans, I ask that you consider the consequences associated with reopening the offices, including the use of public transit for employees, as well as the ability to effectively social distance and implement extensive cleaning protocols in EPA offices. You must keep the safety and well-being of your employees and their families as the top priority.

As such, I request that you provide to me additional information on the EPA's plan to reopen facilities and resume operations. I urge you to detail how the safety of your employees and their families, based on scientific data, is addressed, as well as how any cleaning and social distancing protocols will be implemented. The employees of your agency are counting on it.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator