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April 2, 2020

Honorable Governor Gretchen Whitmer

P.O. Box 30013

Lansing, Michigan 48909

Governor Whitmer,

Agriculture is one of the 16 critical infrastructure sectors identified by the Department of Homeland Security's Cyber security & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) as vital to the economic security, public health and safety of the United States. We are writing to highlight an essential aspect of agricultural production and distribution—**floriculture**—and its impact on public health.

While access to food and medicine is of utmost importance during this COVID-19 crisis, the mental health needs of our population must also be taken into account. Consider this: According to studies cited by the [American Psychological Association](#), social isolation and loneliness heightens health risks as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day or having an alcohol use disorder, and it also increases the risk of premature death. It's also well documented that depression is a likely byproduct of prolonged periods of isolation and something senior citizens in particular are more prone to.

The floriculture industry can play a critical role in improving the population's mental health as we navigate COVID-19:

- Research from [Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey](#), shows that the presence of flowers around senior citizens decreased depression among 81%, refreshed recent memory among 72% and encouraged outreach to loved ones among 40 percent.
- Research from the [University of North Florida](#) shows that people who lived with flowers in their homes for just a few days reported a significant decrease in levels of stress and improvements in their moods.
- Research from [Harvard University](#) found that people who live with flowers report fewer episodes of anxiety and depressed feelings.

Indeed, on March 19, the Governor of Pennsylvania, addressing his constituents about the need to socially isolate, urged Pennsylvania residents to avoid social interactions and instead to "call loved ones and send flowers." Recently the Governors of Wisconsin and Minnesota have also made special modifications to allow Florists to deliver their products. Currently the public must visit a big box store or produce stand to get their flowers, not ideal. Professional Florists are uniquely positioned to provide virtual sales and touch free delivery, a much safer and preferred option.

Professional Florists can give families and friends separated by distance a joyful and safe way to connect and reduce feelings of anxiety and stress—all through the convenience and safety of electronic ordering and touch-free delivery. Our industry has been offering delivery for well over 100 years, so just like restaurants, couriers and other delivery services, florists are well equipped to get our product to consumers while adhering to the Centers for Disease Control guidelines.

On behalf of the Professional Florists we ask you to allow our floral businesses to play a vital role in improving public health at a time when our population needs it most.

Thank you in advance for your consideration!

Respectfully,

Rodney P. Crittenden

EVP/CEO

Great Lakes Floral Association