

MICHAEL F. BENNET
COLORADO

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

FINANCE

INTELLIGENCE

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0609

WASHINGTON, DC:
261 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-5852

COLORADO:
CESAR E. CHAVEZ BUILDING
1244 SPEER BOULEVARD
DENVER, CO 80204
(303) 455-7600

<http://www.bennet.senate.gov>

May 13, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Pence:

I write to request an update on your April 10 commitment to provide tests, personal protective equipment (PPE), and other protective health measures to the JBS USA (JBS) plant in Greeley, Colorado and ask your assistance in procuring similar provisions for other meat and food processing plant employees in Colorado. As Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) continues to spread, it is critical to test employees, their families, and the surrounding community to protect Coloradans' health and safeguard our nation's food supply.

Across the country, meat and other food processing plants are some of the largest and fastest growing COVID-19 hotspots, largely due to workers' close proximity to each other on the job. In Colorado, this industry has the second largest number of cases and fatalities, second only to nursing homes. As you know, the outbreak associated with the JBS plant in Greeley, Colorado continues to receive national attention, with seven employee deaths and 280 COVID-19 positive cases since March 25. On April 10, you stated that you were working to ensure a flow of testing resources to Greeley to address the outbreak. That same day, JBS announced they would test all employees for COVID-19. However, after initial rounds of testing, the company postponed testing for most of the employees. Without widespread community testing and a flow of resources, we have an uncertain picture of the disease's spread within the plant and the larger community.

As employees at meat processing plants and their families continue to get sick, it will be harder for these plants to continue operating. Without PPE and other health resources, it will be a challenge for these plants to follow health and safety recommendations that the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued. Without healthy employees, the meat supply chains will continue to remain backlogged, affecting farmers' and ranchers' bottom line. Accordingly, I strongly urge you to send COVID-19 tests, PPE, and other necessary support to prioritize testing in communities near meat and food processing plants in Colorado.

Please contact my office to provide an update on what you have provided and what you will provide to JBS and other meat and food processing plants no later than Wednesday, May 20, 2020. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael F. Bennet". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent "M" and "B".

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator