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March 30, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott  
Governor  
1100 San Jacinto  
Austin, Texas 78701

**Re: Executive Order No. GA-11 relating to airport screening and self-quarantine during the COVID-19 disaster.**

Dear Governor Abbott:

I am writing in regard to Executive Order No. GA-11, Texas Division of Emergency Management's (TDEM) implementation of this mandate, and the impact on interstate commerce and the domestic maritime industry. OMSA respectfully requests, that all U.S. mariners and maritime personnel identified as "critical infrastructure workers" be allowed to travel to their vessel or duty location without restriction.

The Offshore Marine Service Association (OMSA) represents 170 companies that directly employ over 12,000 mariners and related industry personnel. These maritime professionals are responsible for the operation, maintenance, building, or provision of the roughly 1,200 U.S.-flagged vessels operating in support of the production, exploration, and development of offshore energy resources. As such, these men and women are defined as "critical infrastructure workers" and "essential for sustaining the continuous flow of maritime commerce" by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), respectively.

As stated in the President's updated COVID-19 guidance, "If you work in a critical infrastructure industry, as defined by the Department of Homeland Security... you have a special responsibility to maintain your normal work schedule." ([The President's Coronavirus Guidelines for America](#)).

It is with this directive in mind that DHS, via the Cyber and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), recently issued its [Memorandum on Identification of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers During COVID-19 Response](#), which identifies "maritime transportation workers" including "port workers, mariners, equipment operators" as well as "employees who repair and maintain marine vessels" as critical infrastructure workers. The USCG, in its Marine Safety Information Bulletin, [Maintaining Maritime Commerce and Identification of Essential Maritime Critical Infrastructure Workers](#), further defines critical infrastructure workers as merchant mariners, marine consultants, surveyors, shipyard workers, vessel owners and operators, technical representatives and contractors, vendors providing ship services, and many more.

The nature of the maritime industry, especially the offshore service portion of this industry, dictates that these workers travel in connection with critical-infrastructure functions throughout the U.S. normally with brief notification and little time to prepare. In fact, often mariners will not know where they are going to meet their

vessel when they leave their residence. As such, OMSA is uncertain if mariners will practically be able to comply with your mandate as enforced by TDEM.

Moreover, we note that mariners transiting through Texas to their vessel are reporting to what is essentially a quarantine on their vessel, usually for a period of longer than 14 days. Additionally, vessel operators and mariner employers are risk adverse and weeks ago implemented screening methodologies to protect against those demonstrating COVID-19 symptoms from joining a vessel or attempting to join a vessel.

Instead of an impractical and time-consuming, case-by-case process, we strongly urge the TDEM to adopt the above guidance provided by DHS and the USCG provide blanket designation as “critical infrastructure workers” those maritime-related personnel traveling with Transportation Worker Identification Credentials (TWIC), USCG-issued Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMC), or letter from the mariners or maritime worker’s employer (as recommended by the [Houston-Galveston USCG Sector](#)).

We sincerely appreciate your efforts at mitigating the impact of this crisis within Texas and the United States. However, the maritime industry and offshore energy sector are critical for the economic wellbeing of the Nation and for the employment of thousands of U.S. citizens. It is only by working together that we can prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic while also ensuring economic stability and fostering a quicker economic recovery in its aftermath.

We would be pleased to clarify or discuss our request if it would help reach a positive conclusion. I stand ready to assist in any way and can be reached at [Aaron.Smith@offshoremarine.org](mailto:Aaron.Smith@offshoremarine.org) or (504) 528-9411.

Sincerely,



Aaron C. Smith  
President and CEO

CC: Mr. W. Nim Kidd, Chief TDEM