



Governor Tim Walz
Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

April 9, 2020

Dear Governor Walz:

News reports have made it clear that states will start to see a surge in COVID-19 cases in the coming weeks. Our grocery, food processing and meatpacking workers have been on the frontlines since the pandemic's beginning to make sure America can stay healthy and fed. We are at a critical juncture where we all must step up to do more to protect these frontline workers. Together UFCW Local 663 and Local 9 have 11,000 members in grocery stores and 5,500 members in food processing and meatpacking in Minnesota. Time matters and getting safety protocols in place in the next few days could literally save lives. We urge you to issue an executive order specifically mandating how grocery store, food processing and meatpacking facilities should keep workers safe.

- **Grocery Store Safety Measures:**

To reduce exposure to COVID-19 for customers and employees, grocery stores and pharmacies should implement the following safety measures:

- Limit the number of consumers in a store at any given time and require staff to count the number of customers entering and exiting the store and to enforce limits.
- Provide access to handwashing facilities, including public restrooms, and allow employees sufficient break time to wash their hands, as necessary and at a minimum every 30 minutes.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Provide disinfecting wipes at point of entrance for customers to disinfect carts, at cash registers and/or other appropriate locations.
- Designate employee(s) to ensure the cleaning guidelines set by the CDC are followed.
- Implement procedures to ensure that both employees and customers always remain at least six feet apart. Procedures should include a marked "social distancing line" which begins six feet away for all checkout counters.
- Closure of any self-serve food stations.
- Elimination of any open free samples or tastings.
- Close self-checkout.
- Make sure safeguards are in place for the meat counter.
- Procedures to sanitize frequent touchpoints throughout the day, including point of sale terminals at registers.

- Employees that are sick should not report to work and if, when reporting to work exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 they must be sent home.
 - Accommodate workers who fall within the high-risk guidelines, as determined by the CDC, with lower exposure work assignments or allowing them to stay home.
 - Close for a sufficient amount of time overnight to allow for stores to be properly sanitized and re-stocked.
 - Prohibit employees from bagging if re-usable bags are presented.
 - Provide PPE when it becomes available – masks and gloves.
 - Clearly post signs outside of the store and in the store to remind people to:
 - Have one family member shop at a time.
 - Adhere to social distancing throughout the store – not just at check out.
 - Properly discard their own PPE. Do not leave it in the stores or shopping carts.
 - Adhere to limits of people in stores.
 - Adhere to special shopping times for seniors.
 - Treat employees with respect. If they are concerned with an item being out of stock, to please visit the service desk.
 - Wear a face covering when shopping, ideally a mask.
- **Food Processing and Meatpacking Facilities Safety Measures:**
- Ensure that social distancing processes are in place for those working on the line as well as in break and lunchrooms. People should be 6 feet apart.
 - Slow down the production line so that proper social distancing can be adhered to.
 - Make sure that social distancing processes are clear and signs and trainings in necessary languages are created and posted for employees to read.
 - Provide PPE when it becomes available – masks and gloves.

Implementing these safety measures for grocery, food processing and meatpacking workers in the next few days will literally save lives. Please issue an EO this week requiring these measures. We are also asking you to take the following measures:

- **Workers' Compensation:**

In light of the on-going COVID-19 crisis, it is likely that thousands of employees will contract the sickness while performing “essential duties”. These workers should be allowed to claim workers’ compensation and not be burdened with high cost medical bills when government asked them to continue working.

- **Free health care coverage for all coronavirus treatments, tests, and medicines as well as access to workers’ compensation benefits:**

Essential workers who contract COVID-19 at work should not face crippling medical costs or debt as they work to provide Americans with the food and medicine they need. It’s important that essential workers who become infected not face lengthy hurdles if they become infected with COVID-19. A grocery cashier may come in contact with hundreds of members of the community throughout the day and they should not have to prove worksite infection to gain access to free healthcare, testing and workers’ compensation.

- **Free personal protective equipment:**

Workers need personal protective equipment, including masks, gloves and hand sanitizer, now. Our request here is simple: our members should be on the list of workers who receive PPE when it becomes available. Since there is no established safe exposure limit to the virus, the goal should be to eliminate exposure to the greatest extent possible – both for our members and the public.

- **Paid leave:**

Leave should cover testing, quarantine, isolation, medicine and treatment resulting from COVID-19 for the worker and care for a family member, as well as sickness that may not be COVID-19 but could be indicative of symptoms related to COVID-19. This leave should be in addition to whatever benefits workers already have in their workplace.

Workers up and down the food chain have been required to work in order to ensure our homes have adequate food, supplies, and prescription drugs during this crisis. We need these workers to keep working now to ensure our food supply. Like health care workers, grocery store, pharmacy, food processing and meatpacking workers are essential workers on the front lines of this battle. They deserve not only our gratitude, but support so that they can continue to do their jobs.

We urge you to move quickly on the items outlined above so that workers who are keeping Minnesota fed during this crisis have the support they need.

Sincerely,



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