

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Peter Dreier

**Date Submitted:** 02/08/2022 02:36 PM

**Council File No:** 19-0229

**Comments for Public Posting:** LA City Council Economic Development and Jobs Committee hearing February 8, 2022 Topic: Fair Workweek Policy My name is Dr. Peter Dreier. I am a professor Occidental College. I teach public policy. Dan Flaming of the LA Economic Roundtable and I recently conducted a survey of 10,287 grocery workers who work for Kroger in three regions: LA County and Orange County in CA, the Seattle/Puget Sound region of Washington, and the state of Colorado. The report is called "Hungry at the Table." It is the largest scientific survey of grocery workers ever conducted. The workers in LA County work for Ralphs and Food 4 Less, which are part of Kroger. Kroger is the 4th largest employer in the country (after Walmart, Amazon, and Home Depot), with 465,000 employees. It is also the nation's largest supermarket chain, with about 3,000 stores. Last year it had \$132 billion in revenues and over \$4 billion in profits. We learned from the survey that 78% of the workers are food insecure, two-thirds can't make ends meet, and 14% had been homeless while working for the company. Kroger relies on poorly-paid, part-time workers with constantly changing schedules. In fact, the constantly changing schedules were one of the biggest complaints about their jobs. 11 percent of Kroger workers have schedules that change every day. Another 13 percent are told about schedule changes only one day in advance. In other words, one quarter (24%) of Kroger workers are told about schedule changes the same day or only one day in advance. Another 31 percent of workers get only 2 to 5 days' notice of schedule changes. In sum, 55% of workers get 5 or less days notice of schedule changes. Another 28 percent of workers get 1 to 2 weeks' notice. Only 16 percent of workers have schedules that do not change. The workers noted that Kroger's unpredictable schedules make it difficult for them to balance work and family life, particularly child care. Only 30 percent of Kroger workers work full-time. The typical grocery worker works about 30 hours a week for very low pay. But they told us in the survey that their unpredictable schedules makes it almost impossible for them to get a second job. 86% of Kroger workers rely on their Kroger job as their only source of earned income. A majority of part-time workers reported that they would like to work more hours. The unpredictable schedules, along with low pay and concerns for safety, especially during the COVID pandemic, are the major

reasons for the higher turnover of grocery workers. Turnover at Kroger stores – including Ralphs and Food 4 Less – has increased four-fold since the onset of COVID. We asked the workers why Kroger has such high turnover. Half (49 percent) say workers quit their jobs because of irregular work schedules and part-time hours that do not provide enough earnings. The Fair Workweek Policy would directly address these problems and provide retail workers with schedules that help them balance their work and family responsibilities and their ability to get an education. Over a third of Kroger workers (39 percent) say that their colleagues quit because their work schedule conflict with other obligations, such as family responsibilities and child care. A third of workers say that managers change work schedules to retaliate against workers who they do not like. Over three-quarters of workers also say that workers are not able to complete all of the assigned tasks at their store. Over three quarters (77 percent) of workers say that there are not enough workers at their store to provide good customer service. Two-thirds of workers report that Kroger has increased the amount of work that they have to complete during their shift. Workplace stress has a direct impact on the emotional well-being of workers. Over three-quarters of Kroger workers say that their workplace stress follows them home in the form of ongoing depression and anxiety.