



As CLUE, we educate, organize, and mobilize the faith community to accompany workers and their families in their struggle for good jobs, dignity, and justice.

January 4th, 2021

Los Angeles City Council President Nury Martinez
200 North Spring Street, Suite 470
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Council file number 20-1609 Support for Hazard Pay for Grocery Workers

Dear Honorable Council President Martinez and LA City Council Members,

On behalf of Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, we are writing to express our strong support for the emergency, temporary ordinance of \$5.00 hazard pay for grocery workers in the City of Los Angeles. CLUE is an interfaith, interracial organization that walks with low-wage workers in their struggle for good jobs and justice. For 25 years, we have had our finger on the pulse of what harms our communities most. We are also a member of the Fair Workweek LA coalition which is a coalition of over 30 community groups, including health advocates, clergy, worker rights groups, as well as, grocery and retail workers.

Together with UFCW 770, their members, as well as, grocery workers from across the city of Los Angeles we have been calling on grocery store corporations to reinstate hazard pay as companies see record profits. Major grocers, such as Kroger, which owns Food 4 Less and Ralphs, agreed to pay Los Angeles grocery store workers a \$2 an hour hazard pay increase in March, only to end it six weeks later in May. Meanwhile grocery store companies have seen their net earnings skyrocket this year, with Kroger reporting a 15.8% increase in sales and net earnings increase of just under 100% in the first three quarters of 2020 as compared to the first three quarters in 2019.

Grocery workers are the unsung heroes of this pandemic and have been risking their lives and been on the frontlines for months providing a lifeline for our communities and keeping us fed. Many grocery workers have become the primary earners in their households as families struggle under the combined weight of COVID-19 and widespread unemployment. Working Angelinos, especially families of color, have also not been able to shelter in place throughout the pandemic because they are more likely to hold essential jobs and thus face an increased exposure to COVID.

As COVID-19 cases soar and Intensive Care Unit capacity reaches a breaking point in Los Angeles, grocery store workers continue to face the risk of infection and endure hazardous working conditions. To date, over 2,000 UFCW 770 members have contracted COVID-19. Nationwide, more than 200 UFCW members have died of COVID-19. We know the number is much higher due to lack of reporting by all grocery chains.

This is the right policy for this unprecedented moment. Grocery workers deserve hazard pay. Large grocery chains can afford it. Other large cities throughout California are poised to create similar policy solutions. Los Angeles must lead as it always has in fighting for the rights and dignity of working people. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Michelle M. Seyler, J.D.
Executive Director

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