



Greg Frazier, President • Janet Lucero, Secretary-Treasurer

March 18, 2020

First Responder Designation and State Support for Paid Leave

Dear Governor Lujan-Grisham:

As President of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local Union of New Mexico, which represents approximately 4,000 workers throughout New Mexico, I want to thank you for your leadership at this critical time.

Our UFCW members in grocery stores, are on the front lines of the Coronavirus outbreak working around the clock to keep these businesses open and ensure that families in our communities have the essential food and supplies they need.

Our membership is uniquely exposed to the Coronavirus because of their essential work. This is particularly true because, in servicing the public, our members cannot self-distance as recommended by the CDC. And, additionally, our members do not receive employer health coverage during the first year of their employment.

Keeping our communities healthy and safe is our first priority, but our members need strong worker protections like paid sick leave effective on the first day of absence to continue doing these vital jobs.

Today, on behalf of UFCW Local 1564 and our 4,000 members, I am calling on you to do the right thing by recognizing New Mexico's grocery retailers as first responders and protect them as follows:

1. Require grocery employers to provide appropriate gloves and masks for employees who are high risk or choose to wear them to carry out their essential tasks.
2. Require grocery employers to ensure that adequate supplies of hand sanitizer and soap are available at all grocery check stands, store entrances, and departments within grocery retail establishments.
3. Direct that grocery stores statewide be closed to the general public at least from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. during the length of this crisis so that the stores can be properly sanitized and restocked.
4. Direct that grocery stores statewide establish and enforce reasonable limits on customers who may access the stores at any given time to ensure compliance with applicable safety and fire codes.



5. Issue a further emergency labor regulation requiring grocery employers who provide health insurance to continue premium payments regardless of hours worked or not worked by the employee, and suspending any minimum coverage requirements such as length of service.

6. Issue a further emergency regulation requiring grocery employers to provide two weeks of paid leave to any employee who is unable to work either because he or she has been diagnosed with or has a suspected case of COVID-19 virus, or has been told to self-quarantine by a healthcare professional or by their employer. Additionally, this regulation should extend the above coverage to employees caring for a family member or loved one diagnosed with COVID-19 virus.

7. Issue a further emergency regulation directing that these critical employees receive, in addition to their normal wages, hazard pay no less than twenty-five percent (25%) of their base salary, solely during the course of this health emergency.

With the designation of these hardworking men and women as first responders, we ask that you use the power of your executive order to mandate that grocery workers receive at least two weeks of paid leave. This will ensure that our members can continue to serve their communities without having to choose between their health and their paycheck.

These are perilous and challenging times. We can assure you that our members stand shoulder to shoulder with you and all New Mexicans and Americans in successfully combating the COVID-19 virus and ensuring that we prevail in our efforts to limit the virus' spread.

I look forward to working collaboratively with you. I am at your disposal if you wish to discuss any of these items further.

Our families and communities need leaders with the courage to stand up for these workers and do the right thing by ensuring that they have paid leave and can continue to perform this essential work. These workers help to power New Mexico's economy every day and their courage and dedication is needed now more than ever. We are asking you to stand with them now.

Sincerely,



Greg Frazier
President
UFCW 1564 of New Mexico