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LOCAL 7 GROCERY WORKERS, COLORADANS FOR THE COMMON GOOD, AND CONGRESSMAN JASON CROW (CO-06) CALL ON COMPANIES TO PROTECT EMPLOYEES AND COMMUNITY DURING PANDEMIC

Local 7 Members and Faith Leaders Urge Companies to Strengthen Pandemic Safety Measures and Reinstate Hazard Pay.

DENVER – Today, [U.S. Representative Jason Crow \(CO-06\)](#), [UFCW Local 7](#), and [Coloradans for the Common Good](#) held a Zoom press conference bringing together Essential Grocery Workers, faith leaders, and family members of grocery members who have lost loved ones to COVID-19. Grocery workers have risked their health and their families' health to keep the stores and their communities fed. In return, the employers have failed to protect the workers, and the community at large, who make the profits possible.

Despite the [reports](#) of coronavirus cases reaching record-breaking highs, Safeway/Albertsons and Kroger have continued to relax store safety measures. Workers have faced expanded shift responsibilities due to inefficient staffing and have continued to be denied “Hero Pay” and “Appreciation Pay” from Kroger and Safeway, respectively.

Full quotes from press call participants are below. The full recording is [here](#).

“If this pandemic has shown us anything, it’s shown us who really makes this country work, who really makes this country run. And it’s our grocery store workers, our delivery truck drivers, our janitors, our nurses, our teachers, the American worker, who is putting themselves, their lives on the line, their families on the line, to make sure that all the things that sometimes we take for granted, get done,” said **Representative Jason Crow (CO-06)**. “And I just can’t thank you all enough, but thanks is not enough...truly what you need is support, you need hazard pay, you need clean and safe working conditions, you need our community and our lawmakers to step up and to support you in the way you deserve to be supported because of the work that you have done.”

“Local 7 wants both grocery companies to prosper because that means that our communities have access to food and essential services, and our members have jobs,” said **UFCW Local 7 political liaison Melissa McCollister**. “However, we implore both to ensure our members’ safety and by extension, that of our communities, and pay them the Hazard Pay they deserve.”

“King Soopers’ employees like my brother Randy, would have done anything to take care of a customer or to brighten their day. My brother was a mentor to his colleagues and always took care of the people that worked with him, and for him,” said **Nicole Trujillo, sister of Randy Narvaez, a Kroger employee who [died of COVID-19](#) in May**. “Kroger should follow my brother’s example.”

“I’ve got two granddaughters. There’s times I don’t even like going over there because I don’t feel like I’m safe to be around them,” said **Kroger deli clerk Marlon Johnson**. “During that time, most of my family was out of work, I kept on working, all that hero pay, all that overtime pay, all that money wasn’t just for me, it was for my family, my daughter, her husband, my brother who was out of work.”

“We don’t want to feel like just a number, just a cog in the machine as the stores’ profits continue to rise. We want to feel appreciated, respected, and cared for,” said **Safeway file maintenance manager Sandy Chavez**. “We want our health to be prioritized, by making the store as safe as possible. And we want to be valued as employees, and compensated for showing up even during these unsafe and stressful times.”

“Since being out of work since October, it’s been a very difficult time for my family since I was the second primary source of income for my parents, my sisters, my nephews, and my grandmother who was recently diagnosed, two weeks ago, with COVID. She’s in the hospital and isn’t doing well,” said **Maricela Guzman, a Kroger employee who has been out of work since tearing her ACL and meniscus while working in unsafe conditions due to staffing shortages**. “Being out of work as the second primary breadwinner for my family at age 25 has been overwhelming and stressful. This season is supposed to be a time of joy, instead of being a nightmare.”

“Just because King Sooper and Safeway can do whatever they want in Colorado, it doesn’t mean they should do whatever they want. In my Christian tradition, St. Paul writes to the Phillipians, ‘Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves,’” said **Rev. Reagan Humber, pastor at House for All Sinners and Saints**. “King Sooper and Safeway certainly seem to be looking after their own interests, but apparently not the interests of their workers.”

“We’re not asking Kroger and Albertson/Safeway to do what they can’t do, but to do what they can do,” said **Rev. John Anderson, pastor at Trinity Presbyterian Church**. “If the mission of Kroger is to feed the human spirit and Albertson/Safeway’s mission is to help the country live better lives, it’s time to feed the spirit and help those who work for them.”

For months, UFCW Local 7 has been fighting to protect it’s more than 17,000 grocery members in Colorado and Wyoming as the virus continues to spread. It has consistently demanded the following changes:

- Mandatory cart and basket cleaning
- Enforcing the applicable state, county municipal health directives on mask usage
- Scheduling workers more time to ensure cleaning and sanitizing is being completed thoroughly
- More frequent bathroom, breakroom and cash register cleanings
- Adequate supplies for cleaning
- More prominent signage for customers on safety rules
- Have management ask unmasked customers to put on a mask, if applicable by law
- Communicate to employees if someone has tested positive with COVID-19 or been exposed
- Daily temperature checks when employees arrive at work
- Improved staffing on all shifts to enable workers to take sanitation breaks to wash hands and disinfect the store
- Retroactively reinstate “Hero” or “Appreciation” Pay (Hazard Pay)
- Limit on customer capacity and enforcement
- Company needs to ensure safe social distancing
- Grocery workers to have access to testing (at the companies’ expense)
- Company to pay for vaccine (admin cost) for those who want it

[Local 7](#), the largest Union in Colorado is affiliated with United Food and Commercial Workers International Union which represents over 1.3 million workers in the United States and Canada, and is one of the largest private sector Unions in North America. UFCW members work in a wide range of industries, including retail food, food processing, agriculture, retail sales, and health care.

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[Coloradans for the Common Good](#) is a broad-based organization, affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation, and comprises congregations, unions, and civic groups along the Front Range acting together for the common good.