

March 6, 2020

Open Letter to Local Leaders:

With the spread of Coronavirus, now is the time to step up and protect workers

Dear City and County Officials,

As we take measures to stop the spread of the Coronavirus, it is critical that you provide accurate and timely information to the public and put in place protections for the workers and community members whose lives and livelihoods may be at risk. The CDC is asking employers to actively encourage sick employees to stay home. We call on our cities, counties and public commissions to ensure that corporate greed does not endanger public health.

In order to support the many workers who are already the frontline of preventing the further spread of disease, we demand that:

- all employees -- public and private sector -- who have contact with the public - at airports, schools, hospitals, public transit systems, and elsewhere - have access to training and equipment to keep themselves safe
- all employees be guaranteed their average income for the period in which they are unable to work
- vaccines, when available, be provided free of charge
- states require employers to provide paid sick days, which protects our health today and as future pandemics arise globally
- all emergency efforts are communicated in multiple languages
- cities defend their sanctuary status and refuse to allow ICE and Border Patrol officers into hospitals and public buildings
- local elected leaders call on the federal government to suspend ICE raids so that vulnerable patients won't be deterred from seeking help
- federal aid be provided to cover the additional expenses states, cities and counties will incur

Given the realities of climate change and reduced national infrastructure for rapid disease response, we can expect a proliferation of future pandemics originating elsewhere or within the US. Thereby, we request that all plans implemented in response to the coronavirus be tracked, evaluated and monitored for future emergency planning efforts with a focus on economic and racial equity.

Fortune 500 companies should lead by example and guarantee paid leave to their employees and protection from loss of employment or income due to illness.

To our mayors, county supervisors, public commissioners, we urge you to take all the steps you need to take to protect vulnerable communities from the spread of virus, as well as from racist attacks.

For many working people, if they have a choice between going to work sick or getting their pay docked, they will go to work sick, because they can't afford to miss a paycheck. Evidence shows workers' access to paid sick leave without threat of retaliation can help protect against the spread of a virus, and it also enables people to care for sick family members.

Time and again, we have seen that when disaster hits, whether it's a hurricane, wildfires, or a pandemic, the people who get hit the hardest are low wage workers. When the power is out or road conditions are hazardous, service workers are expected to show up for their shift. The same workers who respond after a disaster are often the most likely to be victims of wage theft.

As elected and appointed leaders, you have the opportunity now to prevent the next pandemic from decimating low income communities of color and to protect the workers who keep our cities running.

Sincerely,
(List in formation)

Partnership for Working Families
Puget Sound Sage
Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)
Grassroots Collaborative
East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE)
ALIGN
Stand Up Nashville (SUN)
Working Partnerships USA (WPUSA)
Center on Policy Initiatives (CPI)
Pittsburgh United
POWER
Georgia STAND-UP
In the Public Interest (ITPI)
Action Center on Race and the Economy (ACRE)
Forward Together
Asian Pacific Environmental Network
National Employment Law Project
Demos
Political Research Associates
Restaurant Opportunities Center United
La ColectiVA

Community Change
United For Respect
Global Labor Justice
Street Level Health Project
Chronic Illness Leadership for Emergent Times (CILFET)
Worksafe
KIWA (Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance)
Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition
Equal Rights Advocates
Together We Will - San José
Equal Justice Center
MAIZ
CARAS
PILIPINO ASSOCIATION OF WORKERS AND IMMIGRANTS (PAWIS)
Legal Aid at Work
Lugenia Burns Hope Center
Working Alliance for a Just Economy
Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor & the Working Poor, Georgetown University
Day Worker Center of Mountain view
National Domestic Workers Alliance
Centro Legal de la Raza
ROC The Bay
San Jose Peace and Justice Center
PolicyLink
New Working Majority
Michigan Immigrant Rights Center
Oakland Rising
North Carolina Justice Center
Alameda County Labor Council
Stanford Solidarity Network
Workplace Fairness
SOMOS Mayfair
our developing world
Mainers for Accountable Leadership
Candi CdeBaca
Green Party of Santa Clara County
Ministry of Muse
Yellow Scene Magazines
Stanford Anti-harassment & Support Squad
Occupy Bergen County
Gig Workers Rising