



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **UFCW LOCAL 7 CALLS OUT WELD COUNTY, CO FOR FAILURE TO PROTECT ESSENTIAL WORKERS**

*Weld County's Reject State "Level Red" COVID-19 Guidance Endangers Our Members & Community as Coronavirus Cases Continue to Surge*

**DENVER** – In response to the State of Colorado's "Level Red" designation following a significant increase in coronavirus cases, Weld County declared it would not obey the new safety restrictions aligned with this designation. Weld County is home to thousands of UFCW Local 7 Essential Workers, including the JBS meat processing plant, where Local 7 represents 3,000 members, and where more than 350 have tested positive and six workers have died of COVID since the pandemic began. UFCW Local 7 also represents over 200 members at major grocery chain stores and has health care workers in Weld County. Meatpacking, grocery workers, and health care workers have all been deemed Essential Workers by the federal government.

In April, the JBS plant was designated as a COVID-19 hot spot by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). Just last week, CDPHE confirmed a new outbreak is underway at the JBS Greeley plant.

**Kim Cordova, President of UFCW Local 7, which represents more than 27,000 workers in healthcare, meatpacking, and grocery in Colorado and Wyoming, most of which are Essential Workers, issued the following statement:**

"Weld County's failure to protect thousands of Local 7 members, their families, and the county's more than 324,00 residents is dangerous, irresponsible, and shameful, especially when there are very few hospital beds available. The 'Level Red' designation is used by the state to warn communities about the skyrocketing case numbers and guide county officials to implement stricter policies to keep residents, including our Essential Workers, safe and alive. The state's 'Stay at Home' order for Weld County is a only temporary measure needed to save lives. Of the 20 'Level Red' counties in Colorado, Weld County stands out as the only county refusing to adhere to state guidelines, despite empty rhetoric from Alamosa County to do so.

"The COVID-19 pandemic will not just go away in Weld County if local government does not take action now. UFCW Local 7, our members, and their families in Weld County, have already learned that the hard way. This spring Weld County was slow and negligent in implementing the necessary safety protocols to stop the spread of the coronavirus, which led to a deadly outbreak resulting in six unnecessary deaths of our members, over 300 members sick, and many families who continue to face hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical bills and lost wages. With a new outbreak at the JBS plant, JBS corporate headquarters, and across Weld County, we demand that the government of Weld County put politics aside and adhere to the Level Red guidance or many more people will die, especially Essential Workers. Our members and communities have suffered enough at the hands of negligent leadership. It is time to govern in the best interest of the citizens you represent."

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*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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