



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UFCW LOCAL 7 APPLAUDS HOUSE SELECT SUBCOMMITTEE INVESTIGATION INTO WIDESPREAD COVID-19 INFECTIONS AND DEATHS IN MEATPACKING PLANTS

After the Tragic & Unnecessary Deaths of Six UFCW Local 7 Members, Union Looks Forward to Collaborating on the Congressional Investigation of JBS Greeley Plant

DENVER – On the heels of the disappointing announcement that meatpacking workers have been moved to [Phase 1B.3](#) for the COVID-19 vaccine in Colorado, today's [announcement](#) by the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis regarding the investigation into widespread coronavirus infections and deaths in meatpacking plants was welcomed news. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been multiple COVID-19 outbreaks at the JBS meatpacking plant in Greeley, Colorado, resulting in 465 infected since March, and [six UFCW Local 7 members](#) and one JBS employee have died from the virus.

In response to the investigation, Kim Cordova, President of UFCW Local 7, which represents more than 25,000 workers in Colorado and Wyoming, 3,000 of which are Essential Workers at the JBS Greeley meatpacking plant, issued the following statement:

"UFCW Local 7 applauds Rep. James E. Clyburn, Chairman of the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, for launching an investigation into OSHA's failure to adequately carry out its responsibilities of enforcing or even investigating workers' safety protocols at meatpacking plants across the country, as well as the meatpacking companies themselves. Our Union witnessed firsthand the death and destruction that these companies, combined with OSHA's gross negligence, brought to working families in this country. We wholeheartedly agree with Rep. Clyburn, who stated that these companies '*refused to take basic precautions to protect their workers, many of whom earn meager wages and lack adequate paid leave, and have shown a callous disregard for workers' health.*'

"Since [September](#) of last year, Local 7 has demanded that OSHA's COVID-19 safety guidance be mandated and verifiable, and we have publicly called out OSHA's [measly \\$15,000 fine](#) on JBS for the [unnecessary deaths of six of our members](#). While no amount of money will bring back our fallen members -- despite what JBS may think by doling out millions in community donations to sway public opinion -- these small fines create no incentive for companies to do right by their workforce. In fact, the ultimate insult is that JBS has not even paid this tiny fine and is challenging it.

"We continue to call on JBS, and all the meat processing companies in the country, to do more to protect workers, including stopping the 'Work While Sick' culture by providing paid sick leave and access to affordable healthcare, reinstating Hazard Pay, conducting daily testing, providing high-grade PPE, which is supposed to be designated to Essential Workers, and slowing down the production line so that members can follow social distancing guidelines, a critical policy which has not occurred.

"Since March, we owe it to the family of every Essential Worker who has died, and the workers who got seriously infected at these plants, to find out what happened and when, and to share with the American people, who knew what and when.

"Local 7 calls on the House Select Subcommittee to take a thorough look at the JBS Greeley meat packing plant's operations, and all of the plants throughout the country, and to hold OSHA accountable for allowing these workers to be systemically treated like disposable widgets. Our members are the Essential Workers and who have kept the country fed, [yet nearly a year in the pandemic, continue to work without adequate safety protocols and PPE, and in the case of JBS Greeley, with a 36% increase in healthcare premiums during a pandemic](#). Both OSHA and the meat packing companies should honor their general duty to provide safe working conditions for these Essential Heroes."

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[Local 7](#), the largest private sector 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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