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CONTACT:

Abraham White, awhite@ufcw.org

[America's Largest Retail Union Calls on CEOs for Action on Omicron and Winter COVID Surge to Protect Essential Workers and Customers](#)

UFCW Letter to 63 Retail & Grocery CEOs Urges Amazon, Walmart, Kroger, Whole Foods, CVS, Target, Best Buy, Macy's, Others to Promote Mask Wearing and Social Distancing, Guarantee Free PPE to Workers, Support Vaccinations with Paid Leave

COVID Retail Impact: 213 Worker Deaths and 50,600 Workers Infected or Exposed Nationwide With More Cases Reported Daily

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, **[United Food and Commercial Workers](#)**, America's largest food and retail union with 1.3 million members, sent a **[letter to CEOs of top U.S. retail and grocery companies](#)** – including Amazon, Walmart, Kroger, Whole Foods and many others – **calling for immediate action to protect workers and customers** amid the spread of the **Omicron COVID-19 variant** and the growing **winter surge of virus infections**. According to new UFCW internal reports, there have now been at least **213 retail and grocery worker deaths** and at least **50,600 retail and grocery workers infected or exposed** to the deadly virus. **[Click here to view this press release online.](#)**

In **[the letter](#)**, UFCW International President **Marc Perrone** urged CEOs to implement **five key measures** to **address the growing challenges essential workers face**:

Promote Mask Wearing: To reduce transmissibility, we encourage you to promote mask wearing for all customers at all locations.

- **Free PPE to All Retail Workers:** To help protect workers, free access to personal protective equipment like masks and hand sanitizer must be provided while on the job.
- **Re-establish Social Distancing:** Social distancing rules have been relaxed despite ongoing COVID risks. To protect workers, social distancing must be encouraged in all stores.
- **Support Vaccination/Boosters for Workers:** Government mandates alone are not enough and more must be done to support vaccination of retail and grocery workers. Onsite vaccine clinics and paid sick leave should be provided to all workers to reduce barriers.
- **Implement Inflation Wage Protection:** Exploding spikes in food prices is an added burden to many essential workers – especially those with families. CEOs must use record profit margins to increase worker pay and inflation worsens amid this new COVID surge.

Today’s [letter](#) was sent directly to top retail and grocery CEOs, including **Andy Jassy** ([Amazon](#)), **Doug McMillon** ([Walmart](#)), **Rodney McMullen** ([Kroger](#)), **John Mackey** ([Whole Foods](#)), **Karen Lynch** ([CVS](#)), **Brian Cornell** ([Target](#)), **Corie Barry** ([Best Buy](#)), **Jeffrey Gennette** ([Macy's](#)), and many others.

UFCW International President Marc Perrone letter to CEOs is excerpted below:

“America’s essential workers have had to contend with an ongoing deadly pandemic that has upended their daily lives as they have put their health and safety at risk every single day. For nearly two years, the threat of COVID-19 has persisted and evolved, even as many of America’s largest food and retail companies have relaxed their safety measures. With the new COVID-19 winter surge and emergence of the Omicron variant, it is critical for our nation’s largest retail and food employers – including Amazon, Walmart, Kroger, and Whole Foods – to take immediate steps to protect essential workers and members of the public during this holiday season.

“We are urging each of your respective companies to implement stronger in-store measures immediately and maintain these protections throughout the holidays and winter. These measures must include promoting mask wearing, free PPE access for workers, reinstating social distancing, support for worker vaccination and booster shots, and inflation wage protection. Waiting for this pandemic to once more spiral out of control is not an option. These actions must be taken now to help reduce the risk of more essential worker infections and deaths.

“Given the enormous risk of COVID-19 that essential workers still face, we implore each of you and your respective companies to do what is right and responsible and take immediate action to protect and support essential workers. Working together, we can save lives and ensure that this holiday season is one that is not just prosperous for your companies, but is safe for essential workers, the customers they serve, and all Americans.”

BACKGROUND:

UFCW has been a leading national voice calling for action to protect essential workers, including those the union represents in **retail, grocery, meatpacking, healthcare, pharmacy,** and other **frontline industries**. [Click here to read the full text of the UFCW letter](#), which was sent to the CEOs of the following retail and grocery companies across the country:

1. **Amazon.com Inc.** - Seattle, WA
2. **Walmart Inc.** - Bentonville, AR
3. **The Kroger Co.** - Cincinnati, OH
4. **Costco Wholesale Corp.** - Issaquah, WA
5. **Whole Foods Market Inc.** - Austin, TX
6. **Sam's Club** - Bentonville, AR
7. **Albertsons Companies** - Boise, ID
8. **Ahold Delhaize USA** - Quincy, MA
9. **CVS Health** - Woonsocket, RI
10. **Macy's Inc.** - New York, NY
11. **Target** - Minneapolis, MN
12. **Dollar General** - Goodlettsville, TN
13. **Rite Aid** - Camp Hill, PA
14. **Walgreens** - Deerfield, IL
15. **Nordstrom** - Seattle, WA
16. **Publix Super Markets Inc.** - Lakeland, FL
17. **Aldi Inc.** - Batavia, IL
18. **Home Depot** - Atlanta, GA
19. **Best Buy** - Richfield, MN
20. **Bed Bath & Beyond** - Union, NJ
21. **H-E-B** - San Antonio, TX
22. **Southeastern Grocers** - Jacksonville, FL
23. **Wegmans Food Markets Inc.** - Rochester, NY
24. **BJ's Wholesale Club Inc.** - Westborough, MA
25. **Hy-Vee Inc.** - West Des Moines, IA
26. **WinCo Foods LLC** - Boise, ID
27. **Save-A-Lot** - Earth City, MO
28. **Winn-Dixie Stores Inc.** - Jacksonville, FL
29. **Sprouts Farmers Markets** - Phoenix, AZ
30. **DeMoulas Supermarkets Inc.** - Tewksbury, MA
31. **Smart & Final Stores LLC** - Commerce, CA
32. **Ingles Markets Inc.** - Black Mountain, NC
33. **Golub Corporation** - Schenectady, NY
34. **IGA Inc.** - Chicago, IL
35. **Lidl US LLC** - Arlington, VA
36. **K-VA-T Food Stores Inc.** - Abingdon, VA
37. **Brookshire Grocery Co.** - Tyler, TX
38. **Grocery Outlet Inc.** - Emeryville, CA
39. **Big Y Foods Inc.** - Springfield, MA

40. **Gordon Food Service Store** - Wyoming, MI
41. **The Fresh Market Inc.** - Greensboro, NC
42. **Bashas' Inc.** - Chandler, AZ
43. **Cardenas Markets LLC** - Ontario, CA
44. **Fareway Stores Inc.** - Boone, IA
45. **Woodman's Food Markets Inc.** - Janesville, WI
46. **Rouses Enterprises LLC** - Thibodaux, LA
47. **Marc Glassman Inc.** - Cleveland, OH
48. **Lowes Pay and Save Inc.** - Littlefield, TX
49. **Redner's Markets Inc.** - Reading, PA
50. **Brookshire Brothers Ltd.** - Lufkin, TX
51. **Four B Corp.** - Kansas City, KS
52. **Associated Food Stores** - Salt Lake City, UT
53. **Niemann Foods Inc.** - Quincy, IL
54. **Cosentino's Food Stores** - Prairie Village, KS
55. **All American Quality Food Inc.** - Stockbridge, GA
56. **Food Giant Supermarkets Inc.** - Sikeston, MO
57. **Harmon City Inc.** - West Valley City, UT
58. **Sedano's Supermarkets Inc.** - Hialeah, FL
59. **Stew Leonard's** - Norwalk, CT
60. **Fresh Encounter Inc.** - Findlay, OH
61. **B & R Stores Inc.** - Lincoln, NE
62. **ABC Stores Hawaii** - Honolulu, HI
63. **Aurora Grocery Group** - Charlotte, NC

Full text of the UFCW letter to retail and grocery CEOs is also included below:

UFCW Letter to Top Retail and Grocery CEOs on Omicron and COVID Safety:

For nearly two years, America's essential workers have had to contend with an ongoing deadly pandemic that has upended their daily lives and forced them to confront a series of workplace challenges. Unlike millions of other workers, these essential workers did not have a choice of whether to work at home or not, they were forced by financial necessity and community need to go to work, therefore putting their health and safety at risk every single day. In fact, since this pandemic began countless numbers of essential workers have been exposed to COVID, including at least 497 UFCW essential workers who have died, 35,945 who have been exposed and 68,891 who tested positive for COVID.

As you know, throughout this difficult period, the threat of COVID-19 variants has persisted and evolved even as many of America's largest food and retail companies have relaxed their safety measures. Now, with the Delta variant driving a dangerous [winter surge of COVID-19 cases in 39 states](#) and new variants like Omicron further raising fears about public safety, we believe it is critical for our nation's largest retail and food employers, including Walmart, Amazon, Safeway, and Kroger to take immediate steps to protect essential workers and members of the public during this holiday season.

Given our responsibility to protect our 1.3 million food and retail union workers, as well as the millions of non-union food and retail workers, we are urging each of your respective companies to implement stronger in-store measures this winter as we see COVID-19 cases rapidly rising again. Based on our relationships with virus experts, the following safety measures should be (re)instated, including:

- **Promote Mask Wearing:** To reduce transmissibility, we encourage you to promote mask wearing for all customers at all locations.
- **Free PPE to All Retail Workers:** To help protect essential workers, free access to personal protective equipment like masks and hand sanitizer must be provided while on the job.
- **Re-establish Social Distancing:** As the pandemic has progressed, social distancing rules have been dramatically relaxed. To protect workers and essential workers, social distancing should be enforced at all locations.
- **Support Vaccination/Boosters for Workers:** While the government is mandating vaccinations for large employers, not enough is being done to support the vaccination of food and retail workers. Specifically, paid sick leave benefits should be provided to all workers as an added benefit to encourage them to get the initial vaccination and/or the vaccination booster should they have a reaction from the vaccine.
- **Implement Inflation Wage Protection:** The exploding spike in food prices is impacting all workers and has added an additional burden to many essential workers – especially those with families. The reality is that the threat of COVID and the new variant is clearly contributing to historic inflation, fueling customer frustrations, and is making the job essential workers do in this pandemic even more difficult. Food and retail companies must use record profit margins to increase worker hourly pay and alleviate the impact of inflation.

Collectively, each of the safety and protection actions outlined above represent critical steps that you and your respective companies must implement to save lives and livelihoods. While some may argue that such measures are not needed at this time, waiting for this pandemic to worsen again is not an option. These actions must be taken now to help reduce the risk of a worsening pandemic that will cost lives.

Lastly, it is important for all of us to remind each other of the responsibility we all have to America's essential workers. To date, we have been proud to work with a countless number of employers who are sincere about their commitment to health and safety. Regardless of the actions you have taken in the past, we remain determined to work together with you to do what is necessary to protect our essential workers who have already risked and sacrificed so much. For the sake of all our families and given the enormous risk of COVID and variant exposure that essential workers still face, we implore each of you and your respective companies to do what is right and responsible and take the five immediate safety actions outlined above.

Working together, we sincerely believe we can protect lives and ensure that this holiday season is one that is not just prosperous for your companies, but is safe for essential workers, the customers we all serve, and the American people.

Sincerely,

/s/ Marc Perrone

International President