

May 5, 2020

Dr. Erica Pan
Interim Health Officer, Alameda County
Alameda County Public Health Department
1000 Broadway, Suite 500
Oakland, CA 94607

Alameda County Board of Supervisors
County Administration Building
1221 Oak Street
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Dr. Pan and the Alameda County BOS,

We, the undersigned city councilmembers within Alameda County, request your assistance in protecting essential workers, especially grocery store and retail drug store employees, during the ongoing community response to the COVID-19 pandemic. With limited access to restaurants, the vast majority of residents rely on these stores to obtain basic needs. There is inconsistent implementation and enforcement of the current guidance, resulting in insufficient protection for essential employees performing critical community-sustaining work.

Specifically, we call on the county to amend and update the county's guidance to protect grocery and retail drug store workers by adding the following provisions:

- (1) Require employers to provide proper face masks to employees. The current regulation requires employees to wear masks but is silent as to who has the obligation to provide the face mask. To ensure consistent and adequate protection to all employees, the county should identify acceptable masks and require employers to provide them.
- (2) Require employers to make managers responsible for enforcement of social distancing protocols. In some situations, entry-level employees are being tasked with turning away customers for not having face masks and policing other social distancing protocols. These employees have been subjected to severe verbal abuse and harassment for enforcing social distancing protocols. This leads to increased stress and anxiety for entry-level employees and can result in a breakdown of proper enforcement.
- (3) If an employee has tested positive for coronavirus, the county should mandate the closure of the store for a minimum twelve-hour period to allow for sufficient cleaning. The county should use that time to identify other employees who may have been exposed and should provide free testing to those employees while requiring the employer to pay the employee through any period of required self-quarantine or until the test results are available, whichever occurs first.

Thank you for your work to protect the public during this pandemic. We hope you will give strong consideration to the above-listed provisions in the interest of the health and safety of essential workers and the public at-large. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

John J. Bauters, Councilmember, City of Emeryville