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Erik Van Rossum
President

Stefan Moritz
Secretary-Treasurer

Jennifer Graham
Vice President, Oregon

March 5, 2020

Dear Employer,

With the growing concerns related to the COVID-19 virus, we are reaching out in the interest of the safety of our membership, their families, and communities. The virus is projected to have an unprecedented impact on our industry. This is an opportunity for you to be a leader in the community by proactively assisting in the prevention of workplace exposure and the consequential public health impact.

Union's Guiding Principles

As hospitality and food service workers, our members are at one of the most critical junctures during a public health crisis. Failure of employers to adequately accommodate their workers' health, or to inadequately staff vital cleaning positions, will have devastating public health consequences. Our proposals below include necessary steps for public health and safety.

Union Expectation of our Employers

- 1) Expanded, Flexible Paid Sick Time
 - a. Employers must grant members paid sick time without current sick time accruals being impacted, for as long as we are in a State of Emergency as declared by our elected officials. It is critical that loss of income not provide a barrier to a worker calling in sick when needed.
 - b. Employees should be actively encouraged to stay home and follow CDC guidelines¹ before returning to work. The CDC advises employers should not require doctors' notes for return to work.
 - c. Employers must make clear that workers will not be disciplined for calling out sick due to their own health concerns or those of people in their care.
 - d. Employers should not require notes from healthcare providers to prove illness. Healthcare offices and medical facilities are likely to be busy and unable to provide documentation in a timely way according to the CDC.

¹ Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), February 2020 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html>

- 2) Additional staffing for extensive cleaning and disinfecting work
 - a. All public facing areas should be disinfected every hour. The number of shifts must be increased in order to accommodate this additional work.
 - b. For hotel employers, all guest rooms in use must be fully disinfected every day to prevent new guests from checking into a room with an active infection. In order to give room attendants time to thoroughly disinfect rooms at a safe pace, the number of rooms assigned to them must be reduced by 50%.
- 3) Protection of Health Insurance Benefits
 - a. Employers must maintain health insurance coverage for all employees who had coverage during 3 of the last 6 months, no matter the number of hours worked. It is unclear how long this public health crisis will last. If members need to stay home for extended periods of time or face reduced hours of work due to decreased business levels, they are at risk of losing their health insurance in a time that most urgently demands they have it. Hospitality and food service workers being unable to quarantine or seek proper medical attention poses a great risk to their own health as well as a grave threat to public health.
- 4) Equipment and Trainings
 - a. Workstations must be provided increased disinfectants, disposable wipes, gloves and tissues, as well as safety training on best practices for washing hands, coughing, and how to safely disinfect areas that may have been exposed to COVID-19.
 - b. If members face layoffs or reduced hours, employers should offer assistance in applying for unemployment insurance, and must not challenge unemployment claims for affected members.
- 5) Non-Discrimination
 - a. It is critical we all take responsibility for preventing and correcting stigma and discrimination in the workplace as it relates to the virus. This disease is not specific to any ethnic group and assumptions based on race or country of origin are discriminatory and dangerous.
 - b. Many of our members have families and communities in regions of the world most impacted by this crisis. In addition to non-discrimination, employers should acknowledge the special hardship they are experiencing at this time.
- 6) Commitment to Pre-Crisis Staffing Levels
 - a. Our members need to know their jobs are protected once the crisis has ended and the industry has stabilized.

Given the urgency of this situation, we expect to hear back about your immediate implementation of these policies by Wednesday, March 11th. Please feel free to contact me if you have concerns or questions relating to these recommendations. A copy of this correspondence has been forwarded to appropriate elected officials.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erik Van Rossum', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Erik Van Rossum
President
UNITE HERE Local 8