

Protect the Lives and Safety of All Iowa Workers

Signatures as of Wednesday, April 15th 9:00am (CDT). Contact: Erica Johnson, Director AFSC Iowa ejohnson@afsc.org 515-209-2733 for questions.

Right now in Iowa's fields, factories, and warehouses, in our hospitals, nursing homes, post offices, grocery stores, and beyond, thousands of Iowans are risking their lives to provide food, health care, and other essential services while facing high risks of exposure to COVID-19 in their workplaces.

For weeks, workers, labor unions, advocates, and the media have been reporting unsafe working conditions to employers and state agencies. But state leaders have refused to set any clear expectations for Iowa employers, and OSHA and other state agencies charged with protecting workers have been missing in action. Meanwhile, too many major Iowa businesses continue to operate with few or no safety measures in place.

We know that existing racial and economic inequities in our communities are exacerbated by this pandemic, and temp workers, low wage workers, workers of color, and immigrant and refugee workers are at particular risk. While workers have the right to report unsafe working conditions, many have reason to fear retaliation. Those brave enough to come forward too often find their reports falling on deaf ears.

We are already seeing the impact of unsafe working conditions, with multiple meatpacking and manufacturing plants shutting down due to the quick spread of COVID-19 among unprotected workers. We cannot afford to wait. We demand that our state leaders take immediate action and direct all Iowa employers to protect workers from further unnecessary exposure.


We call on Governor Kim Reynolds to protect the lives and safety of all Iowa workers by:

1. Immediately requiring all Iowa employers to follow federal CDC and OSHA guidance on steps to take to prevent workplace exposure.

At a minimum, steps must include:

- Ceasing all non-essential operations and providing paid leave or access to unemployment benefits for affected workers.
- Allowing employees who can work from home to do so.
- Encouraging sick workers to stay home with pay, and eliminating barriers (i.e. doctor's notes, discipline for absences) to taking sick leave.
- Improving ventilation (e.g., increasing ventilation rates, installing high-efficiency air filters, negative pressure ventilation in certain settings).
- Installing physical barriers (e.g., clear plastic sneeze guards).

- Maintaining six feet or more between workers by moving workstations, slowing line speeds, or staggering shifts.
 - Arranging for staggered or longer break times so workers can maintain a distance of six feet during all breaks or meals.
 - Providing adequate sanitation supplies (soap, towels, gloves, sanitizers) and a clean working environment.
 - Ensuring that all work surfaces are kept clean and sanitized as often as needed.
 - Allowing easy and frequent access to bathrooms or hand washing stations, and providing workers with regular breaks to wash hands.
 - Allowing workers to wash hands upon arriving to work/entering the workplace, and ensuring full pay for all required preparation and clean-up time
 - Providing frequent, up-to-date education and training on COVID-19, proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitation procedures, or other relevant safety measures, in workers' preferred languages.
 - Offering hazard pay and/or bonuses to all essential workers.
2. Ensuring all exposed workers access to medical care and emergency assistance, regardless of health insurance coverage or immigration status.
 3. Directing Iowa Workforce Development to provide workers' compensation to workers who contract COVID-19 at their workplaces.
 4. Meeting with workers, self-employed, and independent contractors from essential industries to hear about the conditions they face and work with them to develop additional response plans specific to their industries, to be communicated to employers and workers in their preferred languages.

 We are in the midst of an unprecedented public health crisis. Failure to act is putting our workers, our food supply, and our state's economy at severe, unnecessary risk. We call on Governor Kim Reynolds, the Iowa Department of Public Health and Iowa OSHA to stand up for the dignity, safety and health of our neighbors and families and take immediate action by meeting with workers and directing Iowa's business to take immediate and decisive steps to protect our state's workforce from COVID-19.



Signed:

1. African Community Institute (ACI)
2. AI Exito
3. American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) Iowa
4. Ames Interfaith Refugee Alliance
5. Ames Sanctuary Interfaith Partners
6. Ames United Church of Christ

7. Brost Immigration Law Office
8. Catholic Diocese of Davenport
9. Catholic Diocese of Des Moines
10. Catholic Diocese of Sioux City
11. Catholic Peace Ministry
12. Cedar Valley Advocates for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
13. Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa
14. Central District United Methodist Women
15. Crossing Borders - Dubuque
16. Disability Rights Iowa
17. DREAM Iowa
18. EMBARC
19. FALO
20. Franciscan Peace Center
21. Hawkeye Area Labor Council AFL-CIO
22. Hispanos Unidos por Perry
23. ICFL, Iowa City Federation of Labor
24. Immigrant Allies of Marshalltown
25. Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans
26. Iowa Asian Alliance
27. Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
28. Iowa City Catholic Worker
29. Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV)
30. Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
31. Iowa Conference Board Church & Society, United Methodist Church
32. Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church, Advocacy Team
33. Iowa CURE
34. Iowa Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO
35. Iowa Sanctuary Movement
36. Iowa Unitarian Universalist Witness/Advocacy Network
37. Latinas Unidas por un Nuevo Amanecer (L.U.N.A.)
38. Latinos Unidos Interagency
39. LULAC Council 308
40. LULAC Iowa
41. Lutheran Services in Iowa
42. Maban Global Organization Development
43. MEPEC
44. Methodist Federation for Social Action, Iowa Region
45. New Beginnings Christian Church
46. Northeast Iowa Peace and Justice Center
47. Path to Citizenship
48. Please Pass the Love
49. Plymouth UCC Welcoming Migrants Committee
50. Presentation Lantern Center

51. Quad City Sanctuary Coalition
52. Refugee Alliance of Central Iowa
53. Robert Carl Roethig Junior Foundation
54. SEIU Iowa - Local 199
55. Sisters of the Presentation
56. Solidarity Microfinance
57. Southwest Iowa Latino Resource Center
58. Story County Coordination Committee
59. Trinity Las Americas United Methodist Church
60. UAW
61. Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Ames
62. United Food & Commercial Workers District Local 431
63. United Methodist Women Central District
64. United Steelworkers
65. USW Local 105
66. Western Iowa Labor Federation