

January 25, 2021

Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda
Chair, Finance and Housing Committee
Seattle City Council
600 4th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104-1850

Dear Chair Mosqueda,

On behalf of the membership of Washington Retail, I am writing to express our organization's concerns about provisions of Ordinance CB 119990.

Washington Retail and its members share your concern about the health and safety of grocery and retail workers, as well as our customers. We have worked closely with Governor Inslee and his team to develop safety protocols to protect workers and customers from in-store transmission of Covid-19. Further, many of our members voluntarily provided hazard pay for their employees during the early stages of the pandemic when little was known about the virus and how it is spread.

Two specific provisions of this ordinance are particularly troubling.

1. The 3-year sunset. While the Council has indicated that it might eliminate or modify the hazard pay requirement in the next several months, the current language of the ordinance would allow this hazard pay to remain in effect for the full 3-year period. There is no justification for mandating hazard pay once the hazard – the Covid pandemic – has passed. We urge the Council to end the hazard pay requirement no later than the end of the Mayor's emergency declaration.
2. Effective date. Under the current language, employers would be required to begin paying hazard pay on the date the ordinance is signed by the Mayor. This is an unreasonably short period for adjusting employee compensation. We urge the Council to provide a minimum of 30 days for covered employers to implement the change.

Fortunately, grocery and retail workers have experienced a lower incidence of at-work transmission than workers in other industries. If the Council seeks to address Covid hazard with its hazard pay ordinance, we urge the Council to also examine the relative risk of its own workers in emergency response.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,



Renée Sunde
President & CEO
Washington Retail Association

Cc: Councilmember Lisa Herbold
Councilmember Tammy Morales
Councilmember Kshama Sawant
Councilmember Alex Pedersen

Councilmember Debora Juarez
Councilmember Dan Strauss
Councilmember Andrew Lewis
Councilmember Lorena González