



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR &
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Raul Peralez

SUBJECT: Declaring Food Distribution
Employees as Emergency Workers

DATE: March 30, 2020

Approved by:

Date: 3/30/2020

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the City Manager to include in statewide advocacy efforts to classify Food Distribution employees as emergency workers as well as bring forth to the council policy recommendations to make the same classification locally.

BACKGROUND

We are in a crisis and all essential resources are at full throttle. For the majority of our county, we continue to rely on private food distribution centers such as grocery stores and wholesale centers – which are working at capacity with strict social distancing restrictions in place. Our County’s leading community food distributor, Second Harvest of Silicon Valley, is courageously working to meet the demand of our county families’ food needs, having recently enlisted the assistance of the California National Guard to amp up the work capacity. In the event that more stringent action is necessary due to the COVID-19 crisis, “essential workers” may be narrowed to only those classified as emergency workers. It is critical then that food distribution employees such as grocery store personnel should be classified as such to sustain our food supply chain.

Similar classifications have been made by the States of Minnesota¹ and Vermont², specifying the following food distribution personnel as emergency workers:

- Store clerks
- Stockers
- Food preparation personnel
- Cleaning staff
- Deli and produce staff
- Store management

By adopting this classification, food distribution workers, many from working class households, may be given access to city-sponsored child care services as well as prioritized by child care providers the same as other emergency workers such as first responders and healthcare workers. While our local workers have our back during these challenging times, serving and feeding us, we must ensure we have their backs as well.

¹ <https://mn.gov/dhs/emergency-workers-who-need-child-care/>

² <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/19/business/states-grocery-workers-emergency-trnd/index.html>