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April 6, 2020

**RE: Item 3.1 – Report of the City Manager: Declaring Food Distribution Employees as Emergency Workers**

Dear San Jose Mayor Sam Liccardo and City Councilmembers,

I would like to respectfully request your support for Councilmember Peralez’s memorandum declaring food distribution employees as emergency workers in San Jose. I am advocating for this more broadly for our state, and would additionally appreciate support for this designation as a statewide policy. It is important that we recognize the significant roles these employees play during the COVID-19 pandemic in serving our community. We can do so through policy and legislative action. As a State Assemblymember, these essential workers have my support both locally and statewide.

As we grapple with the unfortunately growing effects of the pandemic, it is possible that more stringent and narrowed restrictions will have to be mandated to ensure we flatten the curve. This includes the potential of mandating “essential workers” to only include classified “emergency workers”. Our food distribution workers are on the frontline everyday providing us with everyday essentials that allow San Jose residents to abide by stay-at-home orders comfortably with their families. I’m talking about the grocery worker restocking shelves or serving us at the checkout stand, and the nonprofit service worker ensuring our food banks are stocked or coordinating volunteers to deliver meals to our elderly. In the midst of this crisis, I do not believe anyone can claim these are non-essential workers. Right now employees who are designated as emergency workers can qualify for certain services, such as childcare. This is important as a majority of our food distribution employees are supporting families. These employees are ensuring our community, particularly those most vulnerable, still have the necessary food and supplies in place to serve them. Let us recognize their important sacrifice. Please designate our food distribution employees as emergency workers.

Thank you for your consideration, and thank you to Mayor Liccardo and the San Jose City Council for being a wonderful model on how municipalities should be serving their communities in the midst of crisis.

Sincerely,

  
ASH KALRA