

**Nancy Carabantes, UFCW Local 663 member at JBS, for the  
Frontline Worker Pay Working Group  
Minnesota Legislature  
Thursday, August 19, 2021**

Good afternoon Chair, and Commissioners. My name is Nancy Carabantes and I live in Worthington. I am here today to voice my support to this working group in favor of providing frontline worker pay for all essential workers.

I'm a UFCW Local 663 member at JBS. I've been working at JBS for more than 10 years now. I work on the production floor on the hamline. I have been on the safety team at work for over 7 years and a union steward for 3 years. So many of my family work at JBS - mom, dad, 2 of my sisters, and my husband.

When COVID hit, so many co-workers got sick. We all worked much more to get our production quotas out. That meant working extra hours and on weekends. That meant sacrificing time with our families and spending more hours in the plant working side by side wondering if we would be the next one to get COVID. So even when we finally got some time off, we were too mentally and physically exhausted to really be present with our families.

Me and my coworkers were deemed essential, along with my union family in healthcare and grocery--so we kept showing up for work. **We kept showing up so all of us would have food available to buy for our families - throughout America and around the world where our products are shipped. You and other Minnesotans required this of us. And we are proud we did our part.**

We are risking ourselves, our kids, and our community by going to work. **We can't do a Zoom meeting to cut meat.**

My husband and I both work at the JBS plant - we both tested positive for COVID. We have 7 kids at home with us - they are now 15, 14, twins who are 13, 11, 9, and 7 months - I was pregnant during the pandemic.

My 9 year old has special needs. He tested positive for COVID. Before COVID he was making a lot of progress with his therapy, even being able to start walking. Now he has gone backwards and is having to learn all over again.

I could not be home to help my kids with their distance learning. They told me, "Mama it's so hard to do school by ourselves. There's no one to ask for help when we don't understand."

My husband and I love our kids. They are everything to us. But every day my husband and I go to work we wonder if we are bringing home this virus to our kids - and are especially scared about the younger ones who aren't old enough to be vaccinated.

Now we are starting to hear about the Delta variant and about co-workers who were vaccinated and are testing positive for COVID. But I can't stay home, my family can't stay home, my union brothers and sisters can't stay home - because we have to make sure there is food for everyone in Minnesota to eat.

Providing a frontline worker pay bonus to all of us who showed up, and continue to show up during this pandemic, would be a sign of respect to me and my fellow union family in meatpacking, grocery, and healthcare.

Please provide frontline essential worker pay to all essential workers. Thank you for your time.