

Yolanda Martinez, UFCW Local 663 member at JBS, for the

Frontline Worker Pay Working Group

MN Legislature

August 19, 2021

Good afternoon, Chair and Commissioners, my name is Yolanda Martinez and I am a union member of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 663. I've worked at JBS in Worthington for 31 years and have been a union member for 31 years. I am a union steward as well.

I am here today to voice my support to this working group in favor of providing frontline worker pay for all frontline essential workers.

I work in cryo-vac at the plant. Cryo-vac means that I work with the machines that seal the pork products in plastic. For example - while the butt cut is coming to me down a shoot, I use my hook with my right arm, slide it to another conveyor, and then it goes to another machine, then it gets bagged. I also prepare boxes for the product. Yesterday as soon as I got into work I made 300 boxes, put liners in them, and labeled them.

It may have only taken seconds to describe what I do all day but it is hard, physical work and I hustle to make it all work.

Both before COVID and now, during COVID, I am concerned about the fast production line speeds at the plant. We are expected to do quality work, and we hold ourselves to that high standard.

I fortunately have not felt sick even though I tested positive for the antibodies. My husband did get COVID around the time the plant shutdown in April of 2020 when hundreds of my co-workers also got COVID.

When I returned to the plant when it reopened in May, we were not at full capacity to keep up with the production quotas. Many times we ended up

doing multiple jobs just to keep up. For example, my job is supposed to be a two person job. Right now it is only me.

When there is reduced staff - we should have reduced production quotas. When we have to work so fast to keep up with less people that puts our health at risk. Me and my coworkers' health should be valued more than keeping up the line speed.

We keep showing up to work. We keep killing hogs, cutting, processing, and packaging the meat. We deserve to go home to our families at the end of a shift in the same condition as when we left to start our shifts.

All frontline workers deserve this.

All frontline workers deserve recognition in the form of a hazard pay bonus from the funds we received in Minnesota from the American Rescue Plan. Please develop a program that honors the work we do to take care of each other. Thank you for your time.