

October 27, 2020

Office of the Provincial Health Officer,
Ministry of Health,
1515 Blanshard St.,
Victoria BC

Letter to Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry: Protect front line workers by mandating masks for anyone entering grocery stores

Dear Dr. Henry,

Since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March, grocery workers have gone above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that customers are able to shop safely. They have diligently followed all health and safety precautions mandated by the provincial health authorities and by their employers. They have done their part and now the government must step up efforts to protect these critical workers.

Many grocery stores and retail outlets require customers and workers to wear masks while they are inside. However, many stores require workers to wear masks but do not require customers to wear masks. This double standard endangers workers and is unfair. It creates an expectation of safety for customers but does not extend the same expectation to workers. These policies contravene WorkSafe rules, which ensure workers an expectation of safety while on the job.

COVID-19 cases surged to their highest levels over the weekend, leading provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry to declare that we are in the second wave of the pandemic. She has stated that it is expected that people wear masks when they are out in public. Despite expectations – expectations that have been reinforced by requests from UFCW 1518, from the workers, and from government messaging – many customers still choose not to wear masks while shopping, endangering the workers and worsening the spread of COVID-19.

We ask you to mandate that shoppers wear masks while indoors in order to protect retail workers and slow the spread of COVID-19 transmission. These workers have stepped up for their communities. Now it is time that their government do what is necessary to keep them safe. Mandating mask-wearing while shopping is a simple and effective measure that is consistent with softer asks that the government has already made of the public. It is a fair ask in return for being required to wear masks all day at work.

Yours truly,



Kim Novak
President, UFCW 1518