



City of Seattle
Mayor Jenny A. Durkan

December 27, 2021

Monica Martinez Simmons
Seattle City Clerk
600 4th Avenue, 3rd Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Ms. Martinez Simmons:

As our community is facing a new highly contagious COVID-19 variant that is spreading quickly, now is not the time to roll back hazard pay for our frontline grocery workers and therefore, I have vetoed Council Bill 120119.

The significant surge of COVID-19 globally and nationally, fueled by the Omicron variant, has already caused universities to close, global cities to shut down and healthcare systems to become very stressed. When organized labor and the grocery stores worked with City Council to eliminate hazard pay, they could not foresee the coming and rapid rise of Omicron that has taken hold today. I had similar concerns about lifting this bill this past summer during the rise of the Delta variant, and requested that Council not roll back this important benefit for some of our critical frontline workers.

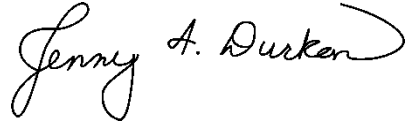
Hazard pay was implemented to acknowledge the increased risk of our frontline grocery workers, increased costs associated with their potential workplace exposures, and to help ensure the continuity of the workforce. As we head into the holidays and face the impacts of this new variant in the coming weeks, it is important to continue to provide our frontline grocery workers hazard pay. We quite literally could not have made it through the pandemic without their work — which ensured all of us had access to food and other essentials throughout the pandemic. We still need them through this next wave.

I too had hoped we could remove the need for this temporary premium — but the virus has not relented. I recognize the burden put on some businesses. But until we know more about Omicron, including its severity, ability to evade vaccines, impact on our healthcare system and its course in our community, it is wise to leave the pay in place.

Letter re Council Bill 120119 – Grocery Worker COVID Pay
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In the New Year, the incoming administration and the City Council will have the benefit of much more information regarding Omicron and its impacts, and can work with organized labor, other workers and impacted businesses to evaluate the appropriate next steps.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny A. Durkan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and a decorative flourish at the end.

Jenny A. Durkan
Mayor of Seattle