

Statement from Stuart Appelbaum, President, Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU):

“Reporting to work should not be a life or death decision for poultry workers. Unfortunately, during this pandemic, poultry companies have been slow to take appropriate action to protect their workers. Even now, within their plants, people are working too closely to each other, with some workers lacking proper PPE. Employers continue to create disincentives from taking time off—even when workers feel sick. Poultry workers need slower line speeds to allow for social distancing; they need greater access to free PPE provided by their employer; they deserve essential pay for the essential work they do; and they need paid sick and paid family leave to care for themselves and their families should they fall ill.”

Statement from Edgar Fields, President of the Southeast Council of the RWDSU:

“The poultry industry has been putting America’s appetite ahead of American lives for far too long in the COVID-19 pandemic, and it needs to stop now. The only way to ensure workers are protected is to ensure they are tested regularly, have proper PPE, and can be socially distanced by 6-feet -- in a poultry plant the only way to accomplish that is to slow down the line speeds. Our members know that their essential work has been feeding America in this crisis, and they are prepared to ensure we continue to do so, but not at the risk of their own lives.”

Joint Statement by Food Chain Workers Alliance, Rural Community Workers Alliance, HEAL Food Alliance, American Friends Service Committee – Iowa, Idaho Organization of Resource Councils, and Forward Latino:

“Tyson and JBS have adopted policies that reject critical Centers for Disease Control guidance to stop the spread of COVID-19 at their processing facilities. This has led to an unacceptable number of workers getting sick and dying. These policies and procedures have a discriminatory impact on the predominantly Black, Latino and Asian workforce and reflect the existence of systematic racial discrimination. These policies that endanger workers are a deliberate choice by these companies to put profit over the lives of workers and their communities. If Tyson and JBS will not prioritize the safety of their Black, Latino, and Asian workers, USDA must enforce our basic civil rights laws. We are a collective of worker-based organizations and allies who have filed an administrative civil rights complaint with the USDA, because Tyson and JBS have received significant sums of public contracts through USDA. However, it is imperative that Congress act to ensure that OSHA does the job it was created to do and issue COVID-19 standards to protect all workers.

Statement by Brent Newell, senior attorney with Public Justice:

“What Senator Warren and Senator Booker propose today will go a long way towards stopping harmful racial discrimination and compelling agribusiness to treat their employees and the communities in which they operate as essential, not sacrificial. It seems like every day that

Public Justice hears from workers who fear for their health, and the health of their co-workers and communities, because of megacorporations' failure to protect them from COVID-19. A worker at a Tyson plant said *'Workers in harvesting are still working within feet, if not inches, of each other. Tyson has not accommodated this job to keep workers safe, their best protection so far is the masks and face shields but I don't think that's enough. Workers are still getting sick.'* A worker at a JBS plant who contracted COVID-19 said, *'At my plant, we are still faced with working closely to each other on the cutting room floor and the company refuses to provide 6 feet distance between workers. The line speed is also too fast and I have difficulty with breathing and continue to feel nauseous while working at such a pace.'*