

City of Harrisonburg

Harrisonburg, VA 22801
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Deanna Reed, Mayor
Sal Romero, Vice-Mayor
Richard Baugh, Council Member
Christopher B. Jones, Council Member
George Hirschmann, Council Member

Resolution Urging the Virginia Safety and Health Codes Board to Approve Emergency Regulations and Standards for All Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

WHEREAS, Governor Northam, in his Executive Order Number 63, instructed the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry to develop emergency regulations and standards to control, prevent, and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace in order to prevent sickness, permanent injury and even death; and

WHEREAS, on June 12, 2020 the Commissioner's draft Emergency Regulations and Standards related to the virus that causes COVID-19 were posted by the Virginia Safety and Health Codes Board for public comment; and

WHEREAS, repeated major outbreaks across the country have demonstrated that meat and poultry processing workers are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 and these outbreaks have led to COVID-19 spreading to the families and communities of these workers making it more difficult for health authorities to contain the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, there are approximately 10,000 men and women who work in the meat and poultry processing plants in the Shenandoah Valley; and

WHEREAS, we do have some indication of the extent of the outbreak that has occurred in Shenandoah Valley plants from recently released statistics from the Central Shenandoah Health District: 335 poultry workers that work in the seven plants in the Harrisonburg/Rockingham County area tested positive for COVID-19 as of June 17, 2020; and

WHEREAS, a point prevalence survey (testing of all poultry workers in each plant) has not been done in the Shenandoah Valley, as it was in the poultry plants on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Therefore, the actual number of infections is unknown. This lack of information is dangerous for our community; and

WHEREAS, the emergency, mandatory, and enforceable standards promulgated by the Commissioner would significantly reduce the incidence of COVID-19 among poultry as well as all other workers, and significantly assist health authorities in their efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 into our community; and

WHEREAS, the fact that COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on the Latinx, African American, and other communities of color in Virginia as a whole, and specifically in the Shenandoah Valley, raises the issue of health equity in the workplace. Virginia State Health Commissioner Dr. Norman Oliver has acknowledged that the disproportionate number of Latinx individuals testing positive for COVID-19 in the Shenandoah Valley (42% of 1163 cases and 1/3 of those hospitalized) is "probably related to the poultry plants."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Harrisonburg City Council urges the Virginia Safety and Health Codes Board to approve the emergency regulations and standards related to the coronavirus developed by the Commissioner in order to protect all workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Adopted this ____ day of _____, 2020.

BY: _____
Deanna R. Reed, Mayor

Attest: _____
Pamela Ulmer, City Clerk