



Workers United Position on Covid19 Crisis

April 15, 2020 - Workers United, in our representation of garment and apparel distribution workers in the U.S. and Canada, has been working with brands and employers to ensure workers are treated fairly and kept safe during the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are pleased to report that through our engagement with their employers, Workers United members in firms like Levi Strauss, H&M, Burberry, Fanatics, TJ Maxx and others are receiving much-needed support from their employers, with our agreement and oversight.

In the global apparel industry beyond the borders of the U.S. and Canada, workers in the supply chains of major brands are also facing a crisis. In the Workers United tradition of supporting workers around the world, we are glad to join with United Students Against Sweatshops in calling upon global brands Nike and UnderArmor, and all brands and employers, to act responsibly in this time of crisis and hardship caused by the Coronavirus and COVID-19 pandemic. Most apparel workers around the globe do not have access to government unemployment payments or health insurance of any consequence. Without the income from their jobs, they and their families face severe deprivation. To prevent this from happening, Workers United believes that all brands must:

1. Honor all current orders they have placed with suppliers, including completed, shipped and in-process orders, and also compensating suppliers for sunk costs for purchases of materials and labor for all confirmed orders, whether in-process or not. This will allow supplier factories to pay wages to workers for labor already expended on behalf of the brands and assist suppliers in avoiding bankruptcy.
2. Negotiate binding agreements with global and national unions, governments and suppliers that establish mandatory brand contributions to income maintenance funds that, together with contributions from suppliers and governments, will enable the garment workers to survive the crisis.
3. Guarantee sufficient funding so that income maintenance funds can provide the minimum basic subsistence to the workers and their families, including permanent workers, temporary or contract workers, home-based workers, and all workers engaged in the production supply chain.
4. Direct employers to keep workers on their payrolls during furloughs or shutdowns for distribution of income maintenance funds and for quickly returning workers to their jobs when furloughs and shutdowns are over and production resumes.
5. Provide comprehensive and transparent information on brand contributions and ensure that income maintenance distributions can be monitored by governments, trade unions and worker rights NGOs.

Workers United is collaborating with garment workers and their unions around the world, with the global union IndustriALL, and will work with worker rights NGOs like United Students Against Sweatshops, the Worker Rights Consortium, International Labor Rights Forum and the Clean Clothes Campaign in seeking commitments from brands to these demands.