



PRESS RELEASE

Attorneys General Call on Amazon and Whole Foods to Provide Paid Leave to Employees During Covid-19 Emergency

BALTIMORE, MD (March 25, 2020) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today joined a group of 15 attorneys general in calling on Amazon and Whole Foods to provide paid sick and family leave to their employees during the COVID-19 public health emergency. In a [letter](#) sent to the companies, the attorneys general ask them to provide paid sick and family leave as required under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (Families First Act), which was enacted by Congress on March 19 to ensure paid leave for workers during this crisis.

“Without paid sick leave, many employees will go to work sick, endangering the health of their colleagues and customers,” said Attorney General Frosh. “Forcing workers to choose between working sick or losing a paycheck is a risk we cannot afford to take in the midst a global health crisis.”

The attorneys general write that the recent offer from Whole Foods and its owner Amazon to provide two weeks of paid leave to employees diagnosed with COVID-19 or placed in quarantine is far less than what the Families First Act requires and what other large employers have provided. Under the Families First Act, employers with fewer than 500 employees must provide two weeks of fully paid time off to full- and part-time workers to self-quarantine, seek preventative care, or receive treatment for COVID-19; two weeks paid time off at two-thirds their regular pay for full- and part-time workers to care for family members; and 12 weeks of job-protected leave at no less than two-thirds of their usual rate of pay to take care of their children if their school or daycare closes.

In the letter, the attorneys general urge Amazon and Whole Foods to adopt the requirements in the Families First Act for smaller employers and additionally to provide up to 12 weeks of paid leave for workers who must stay at home to care for children due to school closures or for themselves and family members if diagnosed with COVID-19 or quarantined. Finally, the attorneys general ask Amazon not to overlook their delivery drivers who are classified as independent contractors and to provide additional money to their Emergency Fund for those workers, so that they also receive comparable benefits as their other employees.

Grocery stores such as Whole Foods remain one of the few places where people are regularly congregating in close quarters, and the attorneys general write that it is especially important to ensure these stores do everything possible to minimize the risk of infection. Additionally, with consumers relying more than ever on online shopping, Amazon warehouses are a significant site for possible transmission of the virus both from worker to worker and to the general public.

In addition to Maryland, the letter was signed by the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington.