

Walmart Stores
Create a Pandemic Workforce Advisory Council
Lead Proponent: United for Respect

RESOLVED that shareholders of Walmart Inc. (“Walmart”) ask the Board of Directors to create a “Pandemic Workforce Advisory Council” (the “Council”), composed of hourly Associates, to provide advice to the Board (including any relevant Board committee) upon request on pandemic-related workforce issues, including health and safety measures, whistleblower protection, and paid sick leave. Walmart would have discretion to disband the Council when no pandemic has been declared.

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

As a 20-year Walmart Associate, I believe Walmart’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic creates unnecessary risks for shareholders and fails to protect employees and the communities Walmart serves. The pandemic has brought increased media and public scrutiny to the well-being of essential workers.

While Walmart does not publicly disclose rates of COVID-19 cases or casualties, we know from press and worker reports that thousands of Walmart associates have contracted the virus and at least 22 have died, although that number is likely much higher. A recent Human Impact Partners report found that there have likely been over 125,000 COVID-19 cases and over 2,200 deaths among Walmart associates. The same report estimates that 8,000 fewer associates would have become sick with COVID-19 and 133 associate deaths could have been prevented if Walmart had an adequate paid sick time policy in place before the pandemic hit.[\[1\]](#)

Walmart’s paid leave policies, including its COVID-19 emergency leave policy, fail to meet the needs of associates. A September 2021 survey of Walmart associates found that 64% had gone to work sick during the pandemic and 59% felt Walmart’s safety policies were slightly effective or not at all effective.[\[2\]](#) A confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis or mandatory quarantine is required to access additional paid leave under the policy, which can be a significant obstacle given that many Associates do not have adequate health coverage.

With the rise of more transmissible variants like Delta and Omicron,[\[3\]](#) Walmart associates remain concerned about their risk of contagion. A recent report found an 11% increase in COVID-19 related deaths among retail and grocery workers and a 17% increase in exposure and infection rates since June 2021.[\[4\]](#)

Improving the flow of information between frontline workers and Walmart’s board, which oversees the company’s management and has the power to set policy, would lead to more timely, consistent and effective action at the store level and would reduce reputational and financial risks to the company. Walmart’s founder, Sam Walton, exalted the value of Associate input: “The folks on the front lines—the ones who actually talk to the customer—are the only ones who really know what's going on out there. You’d better find out what they know.”

My proposal does not dictate how Walmart should select Associates for membership on the Council. I recommend, however, that Walmart use a mechanism by which Associates can select some or all of the members to ensure that the Council truly represents hourly Associate views.

[1] <https://humanimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Walmarts-role-in-the-COVID-19-Pandemic-How-lack-of-paid-sick-time-prolongs-the-pandemic-and-increases-mortality.pdf>

[2] United for Respect, Walmart Associate Survey, September 2021

[3] <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-12-09/omicron-four-times-more-transmissible-than-delta-in-japan-study?sref=AuDcg4ag>

[4] [America's Largest Retail Union Calls on CEOs for Action on Omicron and Winter COVID Surge to Protect Essential Workers and Customers - The United Food & Commercial Workers International Union | The United Food & Commercial Workers International Union \(ufcw.org\)](#)