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MAYOR DE BLASIO SIGNS "JUST CAUSE" WORKER PROTECTION BILLS FOR FAST FOOD EMPLOYEES

NEW YORK—Mayor de Blasio today signed two bills expanding protections for fast food workers in New York City. Together, these bills protect fast food workers from being fired without "just cause" or for a bona fide economic reason." These bills build upon the existing Fair Workweek enforcement via private right of action and by the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP), while also creating a new arbitration program for workers. The bills also update the Fair Workweek laws to incorporate the new wrongful discharge provisions into the existing scheduling and access-to-hours hiring protections for fast food workers.

"A strong, fair recovery starts with protecting working people," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "These bills will provide crucial job stability and protections for fast food workers on the front lines. I thank Council Members Adams and Lander for sponsoring these bills and 32BJ SEIU for their advocacy."

Int. 1415-A (Lander): After an initial probation period of 30 days, fast food employers may not discharge an employee or reduce their average hours by more than 15 percent without "just cause." Just cause is failure to satisfactorily perform job duties or engaging in misconduct that is harmful to the fast food employer's legitimate business interests. In order for an employer to fire an employee based on "just cause" they must have utilized a progressive discipline policy and applied it consistently.

Int. 1396-A (Adams) allows employers with a bona fide economic reason to lay off an employee, so long as it is done in reverse order of seniority. Employees laid off for economic reason within the last year are entitled to reinstatement or restoration of before new employees are hired. In addition to DCWP enforcement and a private right of action, this bill establishes a new arbitration process overseen by DCWP for employees to enforce their rights.

"Fast food is a low-wage industry that has treated its predominately minority workforce as if they were disposable," said **Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives J. Phillip Thompson**. "That treatment ends today with the signing of this bill that will protect workers from being fired on a whim, bringing security to the lives of thousands of hardworking New Yorkers."

"No worker should be left jobless for unjust reasons – especially not in the middle of a pandemic and after all the risks they have borne on behalf of all of us. While so many New Yorkers are out of work, we need to protect the jobs of essential workers like fast food workers who have helped carry us through the crisis to this point. The Department of Consumer and Worker Protection will work with the business community to ensure that this important new protection will lead to

better jobs that benefit everyone in the fast food industry,” said **Department of Consumer and Worker Protection Commissioner Lorelei Salas**.

“Fast food workers have been on the frontlines throughout this pandemic, and the Council legislation being signed into law today will give these workers crucial job protections to speak up about health and safety issues without fear of retaliation. I thank my colleagues for voting overwhelmingly for these protections, and Council Members Brad Lander and Adrienne Adams for their leadership on this issue. The Council will continue standing up for the rights of all workers,” said **Council Speaker Corey Johnson**.

“Fast food workers in New York City have been the victims of arbitrary termination and unfair reduction of hours which was only exacerbated by COVID-19,” said **Council Member Adrienne Adams**. “Frontline fast food workers are predominantly immigrants or women of color who face discrimination and racism in their communities and at work. As we continue to look to ways to fight systemic racism and economic injustice, we must look to the workplace for solutions. I am thrilled that the Just Cause legislative package will be signed today as it is a necessary step to bring accountability to fast food companies and security to the hard-working fast food employees in our City.”

“Fast food workers have been on the front lines of this pandemic, serving their neighbors, working in tight quarters, taking on new responsibilities for sanitizing, and yet often unable to speak up about health and safety issues for fear of losing their jobs. And fast-food workers have been on the front lines of the fight for justice in the workplace as well, from the Fight for \$15, to paid sick days, to fair scheduling, transforming low-wage, unstable jobs into dignified work people can rely on. I’m so proud that today New York City is the first place in the country to grant them ‘just cause’ employment protections, giving these essential but long-disrespected workers the job stability and dignity they deserve. Their victory will serve as a model to build a fairer economy,” said **Council Member Brad Lander**.

"With the bold action taken by City Council and Mayor de Blasio, NYC is setting an example for the entire country on how to step up and protect low-wage workers," said **32BJ SEIU President Kyle Bragg**. "There are nearly 70,000 fast food workers in New York City who are on the frontlines of the pandemic but who, until now, didn't have economic security because they could be fired or have their hours cut for no reason and without recourse. These laws will end the instability and indignity that frontline fast food workers have faced for too long."

SEIU International President Mary Kay Henry said, "New York City is the first city in the country to pass Just Cause protections that stop billion-dollar fast-food corporations from unfairly firing workers. This incredible win for working families shows the power fast food workers have built together. SEIU's 2 million members will continue to stand with fast food workers demanding respect us, protect us, and pay us, as cities across the country follow New York City's lead and turn fast food jobs into secure, family-sustaining jobs."

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