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Safety of Grocery, Convenience Stores and Wholesalers at Risk with Mask Enforcement

WFIA urges compliance to keep employees, shoppers, safe

OLYMPIA — Washington Food Industry Association President Tammie Hetrick said today that safety remains the top priority for independent grocery stores, convenience stores and wholesalers – but enforcement of COVID safety rules is putting store employees at risk.

“Grocery stores, convenience stores, and their suppliers are being asked to carry the enormous responsibility of providing food and essential products to communities. We are proud of the work that our store employees, owners, and managers are doing. The mandatory mask requirement for customers can be difficult to enforce as we do not want to put our employees or customers at risk by those who are unwilling to wear masks,” she said.

“The mandate by the Governor is enforceable under RCW 43.06.220 – State of Emergency—Powers of governor pursuant to proclamation, section (5) Any person willfully violating any provision of an order issued by the governor under this section is guilty of a gross misdemeanor. This allows local police forces to intervene if people willfully violate the mask mandate in our stores and other places of businesses,” Hetrick continued.

“Not following the mandatory mask requirement places employees and customers at risk. Not only that, but stores can receive penalties up to \$9,600 for each occurrence of individuals not wearing masks. If you are unable or unwilling to wear a mask, the stores may not allow you to enter and offer alternative options for receiving your food and supplies.” she said.

“We are asking for your understanding and consideration as we provide consumers with essential goods in a safe environment.”

About the Washington Food Industry Association

The Washington Food Industry Association (WFIA) is dedicated to promoting and protecting the independent, community-focused grocery and convenience store industry and its suppliers. Founded in 1899, the WFIA represents the state’s independent grocers and convenience stores. Membership includes all levels of the food and beverage distribution industry who collaborate to promote the principles of free enterprise to ensure a vigorous, competitive, economically healthy food industry. The grocery and convenience store industry provides about 50,000 Washington jobs. For more information, visit www.wa-food-ind.org.