

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: Dear Honorable Los Angeles City Council Members: We write this attached letter on behalf of the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education (UCLA Labor Center) as academic labor experts on issues that impact low-wage workers in California. It is our hope that this letter will provide you with information and data about the work and scheduling conditions of retail workers in the city of Los Angeles, especially as you consider the Los Angeles Fair Work Week Ordinance that would require retail employers in the city to provide work schedules to employees at least 14 days in advance and at least 10 hours rest in between shifts. Sincerely, Janna Shadduck-Hernandez and Saba Waheed
UCLA Labor Center

Dear Honorable Los Angeles City Council Members:

We write this letter on behalf of the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education (UCLA Labor Center) as academic labor experts on issues that impact low-wage workers in California. It is our hope that this letter will provide you with information and data about the work and scheduling conditions of retail workers in the city of Los Angeles, especially as you consider the Los Angeles Fair Work Week Ordinance that would require retail employers in the city to provide work schedules to employees at least 14 days in advance and at least 10 hours rest in between shifts.

Currently, we serve as the Project Director and Research Director of the UCLA Labor Center, which is part of the UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE). Combined we have over 4 decades of applied research experience in labor issues, workplace conditions, immigrant community relations and employment standards. We serve as leading experts on multiple labor sectors including retail, domestic work, garment, nail salon, restaurant, janitorial, construction and taxi. We have provided public testimony and local municipalities, government agencies and the California state legislatures have used the research to inform policy and program recommendations. We also are faculty within the UCLA Labor Studies program where we teach research methods and other related labor and workplace studies courses to undergraduate and graduate students.

In 2016-2018 we served as the principal investigators of the first comprehensive applied research study focused on the retail work sector in Los Angeles and led a research team that surveyed food and non-food retail workers in the city of Los Angeles. The UCLA Labor Center report entitled, [*Hour Crisis: Unstable Schedules in the Los Angeles Retail Sector*](#) (2018) explores worker hours and scheduling practices for “frontline floor” retail staff that include salespersons, cashiers, stockers and food workers in large and chain stores. We used a participatory research justice approach and worked with students, workers, and community partners to collect and analyze the data. Using mixed-sampling methodology, we collected a total of 818 surveys. In addition, we analyzed government data and conducted an extensive review of existing policy and academic literature on the topic.

The retail sector is an integral part of the Los Angeles economic landscape with almost half a million workers in the county, and 147,157 workers in the city at the time of our 2018 study.

Retail makes up one-tenth of the private sector workforce in the county and is its second largest employer.

Based on census data from 2016, frontline floor workers such as cashiers and stockers make up almost half of retail industry positions.

- Over half (53%) of them only work part-time and 64% earn low wages.
- Just over half (52%) are women and one in three are heads of household and one in three support children.
- The majority of frontline workers (78%) are people of color, including 57% who are Latinx. Nearly two-thirds (63%) are U.S. born.
- Contrary to familiar narratives that retail jobs are filled by high school students and young people, 7 in 10 retail frontline floor workers in LA are 25 years or older, 83% have at least a high school education, and only 22% are currently students at some level.

Yet more than half of the county's workforce earn low wages and the UCLA study found that **8 in 10 workers in the retail sector lack a set work schedule**—their work days, shift times, and number of hours can vary drastically each week.

Among other discoveries, the report finds:

- 77% of retail workers receive a week or less notice of their schedules, and the majority face last minute scheduling changes, including cancellation after their hours have been posted.
- Though part-time work and nonstandard hours are common in the retail industry, half of retail workers desire more hours, with the majority wanting 40 hours or more a week.
- An unreliable schedule essentially translates to unstable income. 1 in 2 workers were late in paying bills, and almost half of workers supporting children have difficulties finding and financing childcare.

Recent local and statewide policies strengthening workers' rights protections such the minimum wage increase and paid sick time, are rendered irrelevant for many retail workers due to their unstable work schedules. This study demonstrates that the retail sector is experiencing an *hour crisis* -- workers face unpredictable schedules and insufficient hours that disrupt their lives and families. When asked about what they would change about their job, the majority of our study participants discussed wanting a good schedule: a schedule that gives them enough hours to

make ends meet, one that is set and consistent so that they can plan their lives, that allows them to work and also care for their family, and a humane one that takes the worker into consideration.

Our study captures the myriad of issues impacting retail workers when they have little control over or input into their work schedules. A national movement is growing to push for local, state, and federal policy proposals that prevent or minimize many of the scheduling challenges described by retail workers in our survey and we encourage the city of Los Angeles to follow suit.

Based on our expert knowledge of and research on the retail industry, we have found that a transformation in retail employer scheduling practices is paramount. The COVID-19 pandemic and its risks to essential retail workers and employers makes the passage of the Los Angeles Fair Work Week Ordinance ever more pressing as well.

It is our hope that you will find the information in this letter useful as you move forward on the ordinance. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at, jshernandez@irle.ucla.edu or 310-400-4913 or at swaheed@ucla.edu or 310-367-7539..

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

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Lecturer, UCLA Labor Studies