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Supermarket Union Denounces Grocers “Economic Discrimination”; Transports Low Income and Senior Residents to Affordable Supermarket in Long Island City; Councilmember Eric Gioia to Attend Event

United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 1500, the states largest grocery workers Union, is transporting low income residents and seniors from Long Island City to a nearby Pathmark so they can have equal and fair access to purchase food during this Holiday season. The Unions effort is in response to what it calls a growing trend of “economic discrimination” by upscale grocers who do not accept programs such as Women, Infants and Children and Food Stamps. Cost of the bus was donated by the Union.

Queens Councilmember and candidate for Public Advocate Eric Gioia is scheduled to meet the residents, the Union staff and Pathmark members of Local 1500 as they exit the bus at 4:30 P.M. on Thursday November 20th at the Pathmark located at 42-02 Northern Boulevard, Long Island City.

“Communities all over New York City are in dire need of affordable grocery stores,” stated Patrick Purcell, Director of Special Projects for UFCW Local 1500. “When Food Cellar opened in Long Island City, residents had every reason to expect equal access to healthy, affordable food. What they found out is that Food Cellar store was just another in a growing trend of stores that practice economic discrimination by not accepting Food Stamps or WIC,” Purcell stated.

Thursday’s effort is part of UFCW Local 1500’s “Building Blocks Project” whose goal is to increase the number of grocery stores in New York City neighborhoods and bring communities access to good food, good jobs and good health. “Access to good food, good jobs and good health is a right all New Yorkers, regardless of their age, race, income level or any other factor deserve,” stated Purcell. “When you combine the extremely difficult economic times we are experiencing with the fact that over 1.5 million New York City residents use food stamps, there is no rational reason for a grocer not to accept them. To not accept Food Stamps and WIC is simply irresponsible and wrong,” Purcell claimed.

“If Food Cellar does not want that segment of the community that uses Food Stamps and WIC shopping in their store, then we will gladly help to take them to a store eager to serve their needs,” Purcell concluded.

United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 1500, based out of Queens Village, represents over 23,000 grocery workers in New York City, Long Island, Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess Counties. Members of Local 1500 are employed by Pathmark, King Kullen, Stop and Shop Rite, Gristedes, Fairway, D’agastinos, Key Food and shop Rite.