



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

## Astoria Leaders Call on Landlord to Save Longtime Key Food from Closure

MICHAEL GIANARIS May 21, 2020

| ISSUE: **ASTORIA, FOOD DESERT, KEY FOODS, QUEENS, CORONAVIRUS**



ASTORIA — Astoria’s City and State elected officials today called on the landlord of a neighborhood Key Food to extend the longtime grocery store’s lease at its 31st Street location, citing its value to the community amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

State Senators Michael Gianaris and Jessica Ramos, Assembly Member Aravella Simotas, and Council Member Costa Constantinides fired off a letter today to Jenel Real Estate and A&H

Acquisitions, asking Key Food get at least a one-year lease until a longer deal can be worked out. Their request comes less than a week after the [Queens Daily Eagle reported](#) Key Food, which has served northern Astoria for approximately 50 years, would close for good as it's unable to strike a deal with the landlords.

"Supermarket workers are stepping up to serve our communities and provide an essential service during this crisis. The workers at Key Food are our neighbors and friends, continuing to work each day to make sure families are being fed. They should keep their jobs and this important community institution needs to stay open, especially during the pandemic," said **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris**.

**State Senator Jessica Ramos** said, "Local grocery stores and supermarkets play a critical role in shaping our neighborhood's already limited relationship with fresh and healthy food access. Throughout this first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, supermarket employees have demonstrated to be indispensable assets, helping sculpt our growth and community wellbeing. I join my colleagues, UFCW Local 1500, local leaders, and members of the Astoria community to advocate for an extension of Key Food's lease to ensure local families have access to quality produce."

"It saddens me to hear that people have no moral compass in the middle of a pandemic," said **Assembly Member Aravella Simotas**. "Key Food's employees are risking their lives every day to ensure northern Astoria residents do not go without food. We can not allow this corporate landlord to evict a small business, eliminate union jobs and diminish Astoria's access to food supplies during this crisis."

"Key Food's employees have gone above and beyond through this crisis, to make sure northern Astoria has access to nutritious food," said **Council Member Costa Constantinides, District 22**. "The only thanks they've given is a warning they'll be out of the job by October —

if not sooner. The landlord must work on a short-term solution to keep Key Food serving our community, as well as truly work with them to keep them in northern Astoria.”

Employees at Key Food, at 22-15 31st Street near Ditmars Boulevard, have worked overtime to meet the demand for quality, nutritious food as thousands of families have stayed home to flatten the curve. Yet, without an extended lease, these union workers face unemployment in the coming months. Astoria residents also face longer lines to get into a grocery store, and barer shelves, while experts anticipate a second wave of COVID-19 this fall.

Key Food has long sought to remain on 31st Street, even as the landlords seek to demolish several properties to make way for a ground-up development anchored by Target. The grocery store worker has sought to remain at this new property, but has been unable to reach a deal. Last May, the Astoria community, local leaders, and the UFCW Local 1500 members who work at Key Food rallied to make sure the irreplaceable store remained in Key Food.

Those same Astoria elected officials today called on Jenel and A&H to be a community partner and work with Key Food to remain at this location for access to quality food.

“Experts believe this virus can come back even stronger in the fall. New York City might once again come to a standstill. Our grocery store workers will be called upon to step up, only now dozens of them will be out of work. Astoria residents, forced back into their homes to cook more meals, will have to wait on even longer lines to get into a grocery store. And once they’re in, it’s almost certain there will not be as much food on the shelves with the higher demand you’ll create,” the lawmakers wrote.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)