



The meatpacking industry is important to Nebraska, employing 28,279 people in 2019. Many of these workers are Latinos, immigrants, refugees, and other people of color. Due to the current pandemic, the meatpacking industry was deemed “critical essential infrastructure” by the Department of Homeland Security, which in turn, made all meatpacking facility workers “essential workers.” As such, people had to continue to work even in conditions that increased their risk for COVID-19 such as being in close proximity with hundreds of other workers for long periods of time, often without adequate supply of personal protective equipment.

Unfortunately, meatpacking plants have been at the center of many large COVID-19 outbreaks across the country, which have



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Assistant Professor, Department
of Health Promotion, Center for
Reducing Health Disparities, UNMC
College of Public Health &
OLLAS Faculty

Meatpacking workers should be protected and as a community we have an obligation to support those who support us. At the federal level, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) have issued [guidance to meat processing facilities](#) on protective measures to be taken in the plants, but this is only guidance and is not an enforceable standard. Furthermore, the guidance came in June, long after many of the large outbreaks had already occurred. Because of the lack of federal action, states and communities have been left to develop protections on their own for these workers. In states like Michigan, the Governor signed an executive order to require meatpacking companies to conduct COVID-19 testing for all workers, space employees six feet apart, mandate face coverings, and reduce production. Recently, Nebraska State Senator Tony Vargas sought to require key COVID-19 protections for meatpacking workers such as six feet of distance between workers, and an amendment outlining these strategies was added to LB 667. The Business and Labor Committee supported the measure, but the amendment was not heard on the floor before



Office of Latino/Latin
American Studies (OLLAS)
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Arts and Sciences, Room 102
Omaha, Nebraska 68182
Phone: 402.554.3835
Email: unoollas@unomaha.edu

