Emeryville City Council – 8/16/16
Fair Workweek Ordinance Study Session

Good evening council, my name is Logan Harris. I’m a researcher at Human Impact Partners — we are a nonprofit organization based in Oakland, working nationally to increase the consideration of health and equity in decision making, in order to transform the policies and places people need to live healthy lives.

I am here to urge the council to pass a strong Fair Workweek Ordinance that provides working people in Emeryville with predictable work schedules and sufficient work hours.

Our research has found that a precarious schedule for low-wage workers compromises their and their families’ mental and physical health. A precarious work schedule includes:

- Little advance notice of hours
- Fluctuating work times
- An inconsistent number of hours from week to week
- Little to no employee input

A Fair Workweek Ordinance would support the health of Emeryville workers by helping to ensure that they can earn enough income to support themselves and their families, and can plan for needs like education, childcare, and medical appointments without the stress of unpredictable schedules.

Unpredictable work hours and involuntary part-time work lead to unreliable incomes and economic instability. Emeryville has already taken a strong stand in support of working peoples’ well being by adopting the highest minimum wage in the country. But higher hourly wages aren’t enough if workers don’t have access to sufficient hours. People who involuntarily work part-time are far more likely to be in poverty than full-time workers, and unstable hours left to the discretion of managers intensify financial strain, because unpredictable hours mean unpredictable incomes.

This is a critical public health issue, as no single factor is more important for healthy living than an adequate income, and none is more harmful to health than persistent poverty, which literally takes years off of people’s lives. Working families who lack financial resources are forced to make trade-offs between paying rent and purchasing nutritious foods or necessary medical care. Lower incomes are associated with chronic stress and stress-related conditions like stroke and cardiovascular disease, and these negative health impacts accumulate the longer one lives with inadequate income.
Research on workers in multiple sectors also shows that unstable hours and a lack of employee control over schedules is associated with higher rates of stress and poor mental health outcomes — including stress-related tension and exhaustion, depression and anxiety. Our analysis of national survey data found that hourly, low-income workers who received less than a week’s schedule notice were much more likely to report frequent mental health problems than those who had at least 2 weeks’ notice. Precarious work hours also jeopardize the health of worker’s families, leading to difficulty planning for child- or eldercare, and more frequent switching of childcare providers.

In light of the negative impacts of unpredictable schedules, A Fair Workweek policy is an important opportunity to protect the health and wellbeing of Emeryville’s workers and their families. We urge the council to adopt a strong ordinance and to continue your commitment to high-road employment practices in the city. Thank you.