

## Email to Commonwealth Members, 3/20/2020

SEIU Local 668 was able to sit down face-to-face with the Commonwealth today to meet over the impact of the coronavirus on worksite conditions across state agencies.

We shared with representatives from the Commonwealth the feedback you've shared with us, with your Stewards, Business Agents, and staff. We compiled recommendations from your Statewide Executive Board (SWEB), as well as from the statewide Committees who represent your respective agencies. We pored through the data in the Employee Health and Safety Survey you completed, and shared the most common and critical concerns. The top concerns you've cited included:

- Lack of facility cleaning, including daily cleaning (79%)
- Lack of disposable wipes (68.6%)
- Lack of disinfectants (68%)
- Lack of hand sanitizer (63.6%)
- Lack of shared/distributed guidance of COVID policies (42.9%)

We also shared with the Commonwealth many of the most frequent concerns in the open-ended questions, including the need for social distancing, as well as provisions being made for those with immuno-deficiencies, childcare needs, and low leave balances.

We further shared with the Commonwealth your recommendations for how state agency management can help you weather this crisis. Your most commonly mentioned recommendations were:

- Telework (78.2%);
- Additional leave time (78.1%)
- Relaxed sick leave policies (62.3%)
- Working staggered hours (60.6%)
- Additional comp time (53.7%)

Feedback from your survey answers and from your Committee representatives, covering professional cleaning, worker safety, compensation, policy changes, and staffing, were discussed as well.

The Commonwealth discussed many of the operational challenges they are facing across state agencies as this crisis continues to unfold. Contingency plans for a crisis of this scale simply don't exist. Hand sanitizer and preventative equipment remains in short supply across the Commonwealth, as it does across the nation. Fundamentally reorienting operations in the manner this virus requires is challenging given the scope of state agency operations. And delays in federal waivers to enact some policy changes that would lighten the load are being held up in Washington.

Nevertheless, the Commonwealth has already begun to act on some of your feedback before we arrived at the bargaining table. As is usually the case in Commonwealth bargaining, they were receptive to some proposals and less receptive to others. The Commonwealth did share with us that as of this afternoon, they are cancelling the April 10th/17th deadline to use Excess Annual Leave--this means that members with excess annual leave will not lose that time, but will now be able to use it.

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The Commonwealth is also working with the Department of Corrections employees on social distancing by reducing large groups, and being more flexible with AWS for employees with childcare. There is also a mutual understanding of the need for regular worksite health and safety meetings at the Shop level, especially throughout the duration of this crisis. This way, we can make sure critical health and safety issues are documented and addressed. Please, Stewards, schedule these meetings with management at your Shop. If there is any pushback, please let your Business Agent know immediately.

We will continue to press forward in these discussions to ensure that all possible steps can be taken to better protect all of our Commonwealth workers. We left the table today hopeful that you'll see some improvements in the coming days, but we ask you to help us get there by continuing to encourage your co-workers to [complete the survey](#), post your photos with the phrase #ProtectAllWorkers, participating in Purple Tuesdays, and taking further actions we'll be outlining as negotiations continue.

We expect further talks will take place next week to address the necessary measures that will keep you safe as we all weather this crisis together. And we'll continue to keep you informed via email, [Facebook](#), and [our website](#).