



March 13, 2020

Dear Governor Evers:

As President of AFT-Wisconsin, and on behalf of the thousands of employees working in Wisconsin state agencies whom our union represents, thank you for your work on mitigating the pandemic of COVID-19. Our collective response in the days ahead will be crucial in “flattening the curve” of those affected by this disease, and we pledge to do our part in containing it.

To do so, we need strong public policy that supports our shared goal of maintaining vital public services while simultaneously protecting the workers who are integral to maintaining public health.

There are thousands of limited-term state employees without sick leave or other kinds of paid time off. If they get sick they will have to choose between losing their source of income on the one hand, and coming in sick and endangering their coworkers and the public health on the other. Many of them do not have health insurance. Even if they have health insurance, they may see their hours cut due to the pandemic, which could result in them losing that insurance. Additionally, even many full-time state employees may not have enough sick leave in their accounts to cover an illness.

Thus we call on your administration to do the following for the sake of public health:

- Provide 14 sick days for all state workers, regardless of appointment level, who are exposed to the virus or demonstrate symptoms. If we are to prevent the worst effects of this virus, workers need to have the freedom and flexibility to refrain from going to work under these circumstances.
- Health insurance coverage must be maintained throughout the pandemic, and no worker harmed due to loss of hours or other issues related to the pandemic.
- Likewise, no worker should suffer or in any way be disciplined for calling in sick.
- If an agency is closed for a period of time, workers should be compensated for that period without having to draw from their leave time.
- Wherever possible, all employees should be given the opportunity to work from home. For many limited-term employees, this will require being given access to a computer and other equipment necessary to do that work. Such resources should be provided immediately.

These concerns are just a beginning, and we look forward to working with you as the situation unfolds. Together, we can work to minimize the effects of this pandemic. Let’s start today.

If you have any questions or concerns, as always I am available to discuss.

Sincerely,

Kim Kohlhaas  
President, AFT-Wisconsin