

March 9, 2020

Judith Persichilli, RN, BSN, MA
Commissioner
NJ Department of Health
P.O. Box 360
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360

Dear Commissioner Persichilli,

We write to you on behalf of NJ's healthcare workers, including registered nurses, health professionals, hospital and nursing home workers who are members of HPAE, 1199SEIU, District 1199J, JNESO, USW and NJNU. Thank you for your continuing efforts to keep the public informed and safe as coronavirus continues to spread.

As you know, our members and their families are on the frontlines of what has been deemed a public health emergency. We remain hopeful that the coronavirus will be contained. However, while it continues to spread, we believe it is important that the Department include the voices of frontline caregivers in the State's preparation and response efforts. Governor Murphy signed [Executive Order 102](#) creating a coronavirus taskforce with authority to create special advisory panels as needed. We are interested in attending and participating in the preparedness planning activities that you are leading. Our unions have the following immediate concerns.

1. What steps is the Department taking to ensure that health care facilities have appropriate levels of PPE, including disposable face shields; and whether respirator fit testing is up to date?
2. Will there be a Department hotline number set up specifically for healthcare workers?
3. How will you ensure that hospitals and nursing homes are following CDC guidance to implement infection control at every level of facility response to coronavirus prevention?
4. We have concerns about compensation for healthcare workers during quarantine. What guidance will the Department provide to health care employers about the following?
 - a. Will quarantines remain voluntary or become mandatory?
 - b. Will punitive attendance policies be waived for employees on quarantine?
 - c. How will quarantine impact employees' accrued time off, benefits and pay?
5. Have you considered and discussed stigma reduction efforts?
6. Will you be publishing weekly or periodic situation updates?

7. Are you in contact with the Departments of Health in other states, and their preparedness planning efforts as they may present a model for New Jersey?

Thank you for your efforts. We are interested in meeting with you to discuss the ways that health care workers can have a voice in coronavirus preparedness efforts.

Sincerely,

Debbie White, RN
President
Health Professionals and Allied Employees

Milly Silva
Executive Vice President
1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East

Sue Cleary
President
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Doug Placa
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