

West Virginia Public Workers Union, UE Local 170

Jamie Beaton
President



Leslie Riddle
Vice President

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For Immediate Release:

WV Public Workers Union, UE Local 170 Demands Better Conditions and Compensation Amid COVID-19 Crisis

West Virginia's Public Workers are risking their lives and health to keep this state going—not just those in the health care industry, but all those who must continue to go to work throughout this crisis. This risk is exacerbated by the fact that the demographics for WV public workers reflect those of the state—aging with compromising health issues.

The risks are not just limited to emergency responders and hospital workers. The need for clear and well-distributed policies and directives is prevalent in every agency. Nona Ringler, a Child Support Specialist in the Kanawha County DHHR office explains:

“Because we deal with clients coming in the office, we are at high risk of contracting COVID-19. We don't have gloves. We should all have gloves. There should be a supply of gloves at the front desk for incoming clients. We should have a clear, written safety protocol to address the safety concerns amid this crisis. Workers and supervisors alike are confused and underinformed regarding the new leave policies. This should be clear and widely distributed so everyone risking their health going to work knows what they have available if they get sick. Work at home protocols need to be clear, written, and distributed to workers.”

Ensuring safety and proper compensation for all those who work during this time is crucial. Making proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Hazard Pay available are just part of the approach needed. On Monday, April 6, the WV Public Workers Union, UE Local 170, sent a letter to Governor Jim Justice with common sense demands for what working people need right now. On April 15th, we received confirmation from the Governor's office that they received our letter and that the “correspondence has been forwarded to the appropriate division...for further review.”

Since we sent the letter, the state has made improvements regarding policy enforcement, safety standards, and distribution of PPE. We appreciate the measures taken so far by our state officials. Our state's leaders clearly understand the severity of this situation. It is our expectation that Governor Jim Justice will genuinely consider our demands and continue to improve the state's response to this pandemic. We hope Governor Justice and other state government officials take seriously our concerns and calls for open communication throughout this crisis.

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UE Local 170 is a rank-and-file, member-run union that represents public workers in West Virginia, and all our officers and executive board members are full-time public workers. We encourage workers to organize together, stand up for one-another, and assist their coworkers in improving work conditions throughout the state. We can be reached at 304.347.4396 or info@uelocal170.org. You can visit us at uelocal170.org or facebook.com/uelocal170.

Be safe. Be well.

Regards,

Executive Board of the West Virginia Public Workers Union, UE Local 170

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