



ALASKA STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees Local 52

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Ms. Kate Sheehan
Personnel & Labor Relations Division Director
PO Box 110201
Juneau, AK 99811-0201

January 14, 2022

Dear Director Sheehan:

Alaska COVID-19 cases have risen sharply and, at the same time, available testing and measures to keep state employees safe are on the decline. Take for example the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) rescinding the Emergency Temporary Standard that went into effect last summer to protect healthcare workers on the frontlines of the pandemic. While we appreciate recently signed LOAs with the State that will continue certain provisions of hazard mitigation and increased pay for certain positions, ASEA is urging this Administration to take immediate actions to keep all employees safe.

Alaska public employee unions representing more than 15,000 state employees have worked tirelessly these past two years to advocate for working conditions that ensured services to Alaskans could be delivered safely and reliably. As you might remember, we had weekly calls at the beginning of the pandemic that provided opportunities to ask questions and address problems. After those meetings ended, public employee unions pursued every available option to keep members safe. You are familiar with letters like this, the related grievances and lawsuits, not to mention the petitions and rallies. We have sought your partnership to protect frontline employees for two years and, still, our members are worried about working in unsafe conditions.

Director Sheehan, we ask that the State reinstate health and safety measures including tracking symptoms, mask-wearing and physical distancing, allowing telework eligible employees to continue to telework, regulating traffic in public facilities, limiting public interactions, ensuring proper PPE is available and used correctly, etc.

The services, programs, and agencies you administer on behalf of all Alaskans are staffed by real people who depend on more than your discretion when it comes to their safety. I cannot speak more clearly than to say it is in the State's best interest to prioritize the welfare of employees, their families, and the public they serve by reinstating health and safety measures and authorizing COVID Leave to make employees whole when exposure at the workplace is no fault of their own.

As a courtesy, I have attached a summary of health and safety measures that I believe we can agree are recommended, if not required, for this persistent concern for state employees.

I look forward to your reply. ASEA is ready to complement what the State is planning by sharing the news with our members.

Sincerely,

Jake Metcalfe
Executive Director, ASEA AFSCME Local 52