



March 18, 2020

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
Governor
State of Michigan
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer,

As you are aware, the rapid escalation of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) has left many citizens, employees and employers worried about what is to come and concerned about their current health and safety. As a statewide local representing state, school and local government employees, SEIU Local 517M has seen firsthand the impact this virus has had on Michiganders and is concerned about the potential risks some of our members are being exposed to.

As a Union, we have followed your lead and taken COVID-19 very seriously. On March 16, 2020 we instituted a plan to suspend all face-to-face meetings and bargaining sessions in favor of virtual options and directed our staff to work from home in hopes of curtailing the spread and exposure to this dangerous virus.

Across the State, we have received emails, phone calls and texts about inconsistent information, lack of departmental protocols and uncertainty as to how the State of Michigan or individual employers are handling the Executive Orders and directions that are being issued.

For this reason, SEIU Local 517M is officially requesting that your administration continue with pro-active, aggressive measures to ensure the health and safety of all Michiganders and coordinate with individual state departments, local governments and school districts to ensure consistency and uniformity during this unprecedented emergency.

As this pandemic worsens, we encourage bold and decisive action such as closing all city, county and state offices that have direct contact with the public, except for first responders and urge you to send a clear message to individual departments, employers and school districts to avoid inconsistency and confusion.

Additionally, implementation of social distancing should be strictly enforced and all businesses except for grocery stores, medical and pharmacy services should continue to be suspended.

We understand the need to maintain critical services during this difficult time and our members remain committed to working alongside your administration to do everything possible to aide in these preventative efforts and continue essential work safely.

Therefore, we implore you to consider the following options and begin rapidly taking steps to move our state workforce to alternative/remote work locations and consider implementation of such practices for all school employees to avoid unnecessary risk.

1) telecommuting, 2) video conferencing, 3) reducing the maximum number of employees/ public allowed in state or school buildings, and 4) provide safety equipment, cleaning supplies and training for employees who essentially must interact with the public or are required to perform duties where risk of possible infection is enhanced.

We thank you for your leadership in this uncertain time and commend the work both you and your team have done to protect the citizens of Michigan. If SEIU 517M can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Tripp
Executive Director