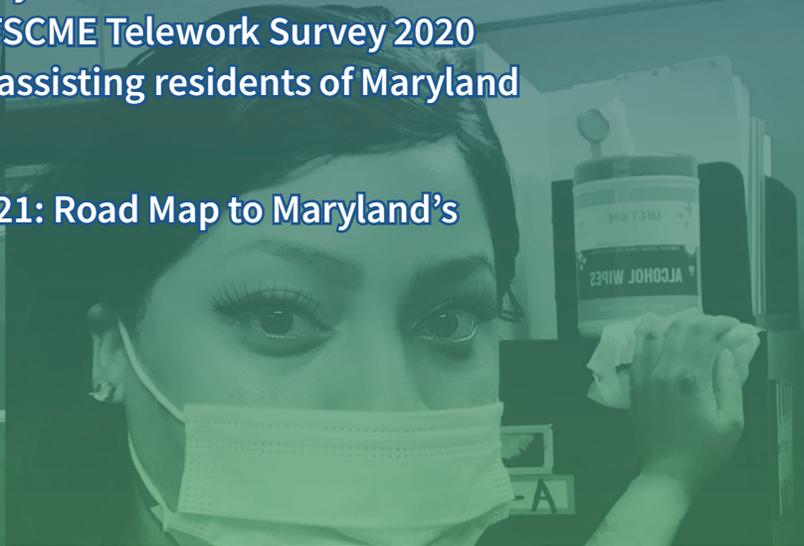




Thriving and Not Just Surviving: Making SMART Decisions to Keep Maryland Moving and Growing During Covid-19

- Providing Vital State Services Remotely
 - Summary of Survey Results from AFSCME Telework Survey 2020
 - Perspective from frontline workers assisting residents of Maryland recover from the Pandemic
- Making Smart Budget Decisions in 2021: Road Map to Maryland's Recovery Process for Working People



Brothers and Sisters,

When the lockdown first happened on March 12th I, like everyone else, was a little shocked and nervous about what the future would bring. I am proud that AFSCME Council 3 members showed up and showed up strong during this crisis. This booklet highlights a number of ways we need to continue to adapt during this crisis.

There is a myth about unions in the public sector, promoted by those who seek to destroy the middle class: that they only exist to extract higher wages and better benefits from beleaguered taxpayers.

Absolutely nothing could be further from the truth.

While we are proud of our fight to make sure that the employees of the state of Maryland stay in the middle class, the most important function of our union is to make sure that our members are able to provide extremely high class and high quality services to the residents of the state of Maryland.

Even after many years in my position, I continue to be amazed at how much Council 3 members care about the work they do on a day-to-day basis. Whether it's maintaining our infrastructure, taking care of residents in crisis, making sure that the state machinery is functioning or providing vital services in our state institutions of higher learning, Council 3 members show up and do their best every day.

The past eight months have been a test. A sizable number of Council 3 members continued to go to their worksites, even during the initial periods of intense lockdown. A sizable percentage of Council 3 members continued to leave their homes every single day and go into work in places where they knew

that infection from COVID-19 was a significant threat.

I marveled, and continue to marvel, at the courage they have shown during this crisis. It's a simple fact that Maryland is functioning better than many states because of the high level of work Council 3 members have performed during the crisis. Council 3 members seemingly have an inexhaustible pool of energy to fight to make sure that the state of Maryland continues to function and that the residents are as safe as possible.

As Maryland emerges from this crisis, Council 3 members deserve a huge amount of credit for their work and courage. I can't begin to explain how proud I am of the work our members have done, the courage they have shown, and the leadership they have displayed during this crisis.

All of this time we've had to be agile and quick to adapt to difficult circumstances. This is what this booklet is about.

This booklet highlights two important areas where the state needs to be especially agile as we move through our continuing difficult times.

Many state employees have been pushed into a situation where they are forced to provide important state services remotely, from their homes. These include people who work in higher education, social services, the State Comptroller's office and many other important areas of the state. Many thousands of state employees who have never worked from home on March 12 got the order that they needed to perform important functions remotely. And they kept things moving without missing a beat. We have reached out to state employees inside and outside of Council 3 to listen to

their experiences during this time, learning what they need to do their job as well as it can be done remotely, in order to ensure that the state services residents are relying on are being provided. This booklet provides insights into the efforts to make sure that the residents of Maryland receive the highest quality services. Please see inside for details.

The second part of this booklet focuses on another area where we all need to be agile and adaptive. In the near future we are going to be faced with difficult budget choices, especially over the next budget cycle. We are going to have to negotiate difficult economic times without cutting off the services that are being used to fight against the virus and to mitigate the effects of the virus. Council 3 has engaged with partners who have a clear and deep understanding of state budgeting and public finance. We believe that we can negotiate these difficult times in a responsible way financially by looking at a combination of using state savings and revenue enhancements, as well as responsible cuts to the budget. Please see inside for details.

The brothers and sisters of Council 3 will continue the fight. We will continue to be agile. We will continue to adapt and we will continue to provide the best possible services to the residents of state of Maryland. We look forward to the day when this crisis is over and we can – and will – continue to build a bright future for our children here in Maryland.

In Solidarity,

Patrick Moran
AFSCME Council 3
President



Survey Results

Covid-19 forced many thousands of state employees to provide vital state services remotely. At the end of September, AFSCME Council 3 put a survey out to learn more about the experiences our members had in serving the public remotely. In a little more than a week, we received over 1000 responses from State, Higher Education and Judiciary employees:

80% are teleworking for the first-time, either full-time or with a staggered schedule that has them coming into the office a few days a week.

16% of respondents said they are not currently teleworking but could and would like to.

“Most aspects of case management (80%) can be done remotely. We had a plan for teleworking (40 hours out of the 80) which would allow full coverage in the office as well as people being able to telework. We have been asking to telework for months. Nobody is responding to our questions and requests to telework.”

— Case Manager/Corrections System

40% say that teleworking has made balancing family and work easier for them, while 16% say it is nearly impossible to balance both.

“I am finding balancing my care responsibilities and work is an adjustment that requires time and understanding.”

— Case Manager/Corrections System

“My children ages 11 & 12 are doing virtual learning and it is difficult to navigate through this

when I have to report to the office, leaving my children unattended not only for meals but for any log on problems as this can hinder their attendance.”

— Case Manager/Corrections System

Nearly 1-in-3 said that they are currently receiving pressure to stop teleworking even though they can continue doing their work remotely, and most were unclear why.

“We were told that President Pines wanted a “presence” on campus, even though I am able to perform all tasks associated with my job remotely.”

— Univ. Md College Park/Coordinator

Nearly 50% said they lacked the necessary hardware and software to do their jobs effectively from home, while 42% felt uncomfortable about using their personal phones for state business.

“I am concerned about having protected data (HIPAA, FERPA, or PII) on my personal devices.”

—Balt. Co Community College/Coordinator

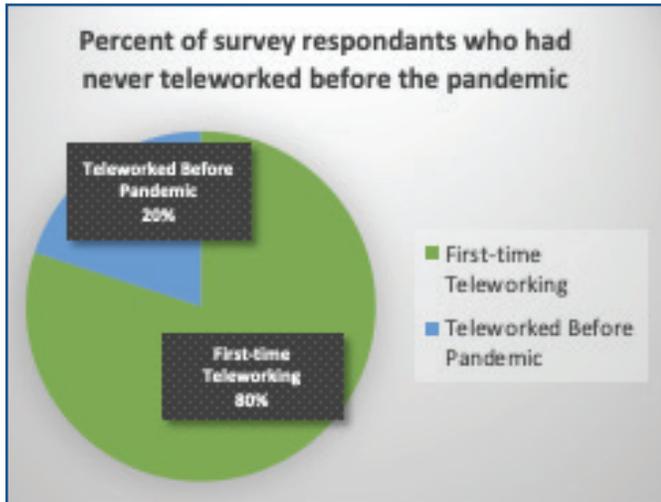
41% are struggling with consistent access to the internet and are sharing personal computers with other family members

“I do not have cable so must use wireless internet connection my provider drops the speed after too much data usage. It causes an issue in keeping a

connection. Provider will only increase with a fee increase. I do not believe I should have to pay the extra fee in order to do State Government work.”

— Dept. of Labor/Job Service Specialist

45% of respondents feel like work expectations are unreasonable, and not reachable.



37% are unsure what the work expectations are. 1-in-5 are nervous that telework will lead to unfair performance evaluations.

“My 6 month new hire probation period was extended. In the same evaluation I was told that I was doing fine. I am not sure what is expected of me other than what I am doing and the lack of feedback is distressing.”

— Dept. of Labor/Job Service Specialist

“I like working from home due to limited childcare and finances to pay for it if it is available. Plus, the risk of having him exposed to many people. However, I do feel like it will affect my evaluations.”

— Frostburg State, Administrative Assistant

THANK YOU to the members of the AFSCME Council 3 Telework Committee.

Together, the committee met weekly to create and distribute the survey, plan a town hall event and assist with this booklet. The committee will continue to meet to work with our allies to protect and expand access to remote work for working people and families across Maryland.

Jessika Burroughs, AFSCME Local 631

Jasmin Day, AFSCME Local 1803

Willette Smith, AFSCME Local 112

Cherrish Vick, AFSCME Local 112

Kalia Woods, AFSCME Local 423

Velvet Whitehurst, AFSCME Local 112

Gwen Warman, Local 1072

Iris Harrigan, Local 1072

Monica Mayo,

*Baltimore City Department of Social Services
AFSCME Local 112*

I have been a case manager in Baltimore City for over ten years. I work for social services because I want to help people. As a case manager, I am responsible for helping residents of Maryland access benefits like food stamps, temporary cash assistance and other support for when you find yourself in need. I began working for the State of Maryland around the end of the last recession, but I have never seen so many residents of Maryland contacting our office until this pandemic. So many of our neighbors have found themselves applying for our services for the first time in their lives. Our application process in Maryland has come so far but still can vary greatly across counties and be held up due to our outdated software. Our agency suffers from long term underfunding and short staffing and the pandemic has only made those issues worse.

We weren't prepared when the pandemic hit and now months in, we are still struggling to ensure we're able to connect our clients with services as safely as possible for them and for employees. Every other week my department rotates between teleworking and working in the office. Baltimore City is the only county operating this way. We have been working like



this for five months and have had an average of fewer than one client per week! When it's my turn to go to the office, I am risking my health and the health of my parents who I care for. There are clear solutions to minimize the amount of staff in the office and significantly minimize our potential exposure making our offices safer for clients who do have to visit our offices in person. I'm passionate about my job and proud to be an AFSCME member. We are fighting for better and safer access to the important public services we provide!

Jasmin Day,

Comptroller's Office | AFSCME Local 1803

When the pandemic hit in March, I was in the middle of training for a new position at the Comptroller's Office. At first, we were sent home on administrative leave and almost immediately the issues with management began. Whether it was questions about our safety in the office, our pay for reporting to the office or getting equipment we need to work remotely there were always different answers. There were so many unknowns in the first weeks that every day felt overwhelming. We felt it each time a new change impacting our work was made and as we struggled to answer the flood of questions coming in about taxes.

Each day, the work became clearer but soon the pressure to return to the workplace began to increase including asking me to return to my old job due to an increased workload. As a mother with an autoimmune disorder who lives with and helps care for my grandfather, I can't risk my health or the health of my family. I got a medical exemption from my doctor and with help from my shop steward, I finally got the equipment and permission to telework starting in June.

My two children and I have been working and learning remotely since school began in September. To be honest, we are struggling with the weak internet service in our home.



The cost of increasing our connection is too high and there's no solution from management. Each day while teleworking, I'm also helping my grandfather who is recovering from two strokes and balancing the needs of my family can be a struggle. My days are exhausting but right now, these are our options. I continue to work hard each day and urge my co-workers to stand together with our union to fight to improve access to remote learning and work for working people.

Nicole Daly,

University of Maryland | AFSCME Local 1072

My name is Nicole Daly and I work at the University of Maryland in the Health Center. My co-workers are part of a team that many students depend on us to assist with their basic healthcare needs. The bulk of our job can be done effectively by telework, which helps ensure our safety and the safety of our students. Only one of my department's staff members is in the office at a time to complete the few tasks that can only be done on campus. Although we were originally allowed to telework, as students have returned to campus this fall, management and even upper management began to pressure us to return to the office to work despite the fact that telework is working smoothly for us and despite the On-campus workload not being great enough to justify more than one person being at the office at one time. We have asked over weeks for reasons as to why more than one person from our department needs to report to campus every day but all answers have been confusing and unclear.

Currently, the Health Center is operating on an appointment only basis. Like many public buildings and state facilities, the University Health Center is outdated with poor airflow and has inadequate space to socially distance. There has been inadequate information from management about the plan to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in my department at the Health Center and adhere to recommended safety protocols. When we have voiced our concerns, they have been minimized and we have been made to feel as if we are not team players for advocating for ourselves.

Instead, my co-workers and I have been urged to 'start working again' and told that the risk



is the same between working at home and in the office. We have been working hard throughout this crisis to continue assisting students and keep our community safe but there has been no thought put into our safety. Now, we are being forced to return to the office because it 'looks better' to students. There is no justification to send workers into an unsafe environment especially without thought out protocols to sanitize and socially distance.

Together, with our union, we are urging the University to institute a stronger and comprehensive telework policy to make the rules clear across campus. My work could be done fully remotely but instead every day we are risking our health and the health of our families by coming to campus. The University needs to begin instituting more protections for frontline workers to protect the whole campus community and surrounding neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, the pandemic will continue. In order to provide excellent state services remotely state agencies must:

Help bridge the digital divide/internet access: Information on tax incentives, provide hotspots, provide reimbursements.

Provide Equipment: Provide laptops, provide printers, cell phones, basic office supplies (or reimbursements), allow staff to grab their office equipment like chairs, information on tax incentives.

Make telework a permanent option for workers who want to and evaluate how to make more jobs accessible remotely. During a pandemic, only have workers who can work remotely show up to the office if they have to, not just to provide a “presence.”

Clear expectations of the work that is to be performed and timeline that work should be done by.

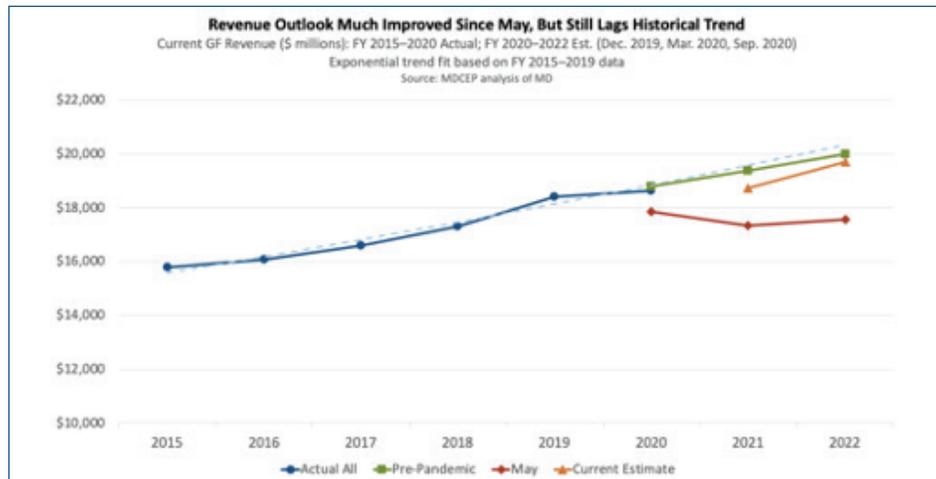
Be flexible on expectations when technology goes down. Supervisor Training on how to evaluate performance without micromanaging staff.

Set schedules/staggered shifts for when workers do come into the office. Provide a flex schedule for telework – allow the work to happen to between 12:00am-11:59pm.

Provide trainings for workers on new communication platforms.

Apply Telework policies and guidelines consistently across state agencies and higher education campuses.

Economic Demands



After threatening to cut thousands of state employees during the height of the pandemic unless AFSCME agreed to draconian cuts, budget and revenue numbers released by the Comptroller and the Board of Revenue Estimates show the sky is NOT failing. Now we have a chance to further turn things around.

Maryland state and higher education employees have been incredibly diligent and dedicated in meeting the dangerous challenge of working in the time of COVID-19. Virtually all of our members have worked through the pandemic, including 10,000 essential frontline workers who have been directly in harm's way, reporting to the jobsite daily. They have continued reporting for duty, working long hours – often in dangerous environments to health and well-being – to process unemployment claims, SNAP benefits, care for those with mental illness, and maintain public safety. It is work that is to be commended, and they have paid a price — hundreds of them have contracted COVID-19 by coming to work, and at least two have died from this fatal virus while working for the state.

This is no ordinary crisis. As President Ferguson has stated, the health of Marylanders

and the health of the state's economy are interlinked. AFSCME Council 3 members have been the frontline bulwark fighting to keep Maryland healthy, and in turn keep Maryland's economy moving forward.

In order for Maryland to adapt, and eventually thrive, in this new world of COVID-19 there is the need to recognize that frontline employees like Council 3 members are essential to beating the pandemic and in turn lifting our economy back to prosperity. And there needs to be an investment by the state to maintain and enhance the ability to deliver the services Marylanders need and deserve, especially in times of crisis. You don't see California talking of furloughing or laying off firefighters as multiple fires burn tens of thousands of acres in the state. They discuss how they can fight fires better now and be better prepared for the next ones sure to come. Maryland needs to have that same discussion.

THE TIMES CALL FOR INVESTING IN THE STATE WORKFORCE

Unfortunately, the Hogan Administration's initial reaction to the financial pressures brought on by the coronavirus pandemic has

been to cut, cut, cut. Before the July 1 Board of Public Works meeting the Governor sought over \$672 million in cuts, hundreds of which would have harmed state employees' ability to continue providing services for Marylanders. Thankfully, after intense lobbying efforts by AFSCME members, the State Treasurer and State Comptroller recognized the penny-wise pound-foolish attempt to save the state money and voted against cuts that would have harmed state employees directly.

The state then sought to "negotiate" the very same cuts offered at the Board of Public Works, \$300 million in cuts to wages and benefits, with individual state employee labor unions. President Patrick Moran and members of AFSCME's collective bargaining team insisted that any discussions of severe salary and benefit concessions was premature, given that Maryland didn't know all of the revenue numbers to make informed decisions. On September 29 AFSCME Council 3's decision to push back on the Hogan Administration when they came looking for massive salary cuts and other givebacks was affirmed by the Board of Revenue Estimates (made up of the State Treasurer, State Comptroller and the Secretary of Budget & Management). State revenue projections for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 and 2022 have significantly exceeded expectations. After predicting our economy would collapse at the beginning of the pandemic, revenues for FY21 are projected to be \$1.4 billion higher than was originally estimated back in May. FY22 is projected to be \$2.1 billion higher.

These numbers have drastically reduced the anticipated structural deficit for Maryland's budget going forward. But because state revenues were insufficient to address Maryland's staffing crisis before the pandemic hit, the state needs to get serious and look into

dipping into existing state savings found in over two-hundred special funds, and realign its tax structure to create a more progressive taxation system that also enhances revenues.

MARYLAND SPECIAL FUND ACCOUNTS

Maryland has 243 dedicated special funds that, according to the Department of Budget & Management using latest available figures from FY19, totaled \$2.258 billion. The largest of these funds is known as the "Rainy Day" Fund, and totals approximately \$1.1 billion and has been virtually unused during this COVID-19 pandemic. Numerous other accounts have over \$100 million balances. Historically past Governors have tapped these funds to help ride out rough financial times, most recently during the Great Recession. Yet Governor Hogan only lightly tapped the Rainy Day Fund (approximately 10% of the total) and has refused any other actions.

POTENTIAL REVENUE ENHANCEMENTS

There are numerous fair and equitable tax reforms that the state could implement that would not only benefit average Maryland taxpayers, but also enhance revenues for the state to address chronic funding shortages for state services and supports.

For example:

- Expanding sports betting, which is already legal in every state and jurisdiction surrounding Maryland, would bring an estimated \$18 million in new revenue.
- Taxing digital goods, such as apps, would bring in an estimated \$38-54 million over the next four years. Governor Hogan vetoed this legislation this year.

- By requiring multi-state corporations to pay their fair share in corporate taxes for profits generated in Maryland through combined reporting, the state would see an estimated revenue increase of \$78.6 million.
- Finally, if we restructured Maryland's personal income tax brackets so that earners below the median income would have lower income tax rates applied, earners above the median would have their rates raised, and the millionaires tax were restored at 7%, it's estimated that the state would see \$689 million in new revenue!

Restoring the millionaire's tax alone could raise \$81 million.

If we are serious about fighting the virus, state services need to be funded, PINS need to be filled, and employees keeping the state together need to be compensated. For this to happen we need to use the money we have been saving for tough times like today and we need to raise additional common sense revenue.



AFSCME Maryland Council 3

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Maryland Council 3 represents more than 25,000 hardworking State and Higher Education Employees. AFSCME Maryland is the state's largest and fastest-growing union for public service employees.

We Make Maryland Happen!

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