

JUNE 16TH, 2020

# AFSCME 3 NEWSLETTER

IN LOVING MEMORY

# KAREN KENNEDY

THE FIRST MARYLAND OFFICER TO LOSE  
HER LIFE TO COVID-19

JUNE 8TH, 2020

## AFSCME COUNCIL 3 GUIDE ON RE-OPENING

As Maryland looks to reopen its state office buildings and public higher education institutions, ensuring health and safety in the workplace must be the highest priority. AFSCME Council 3 has been demanding testing, personal protective equipment (PPE), plans and emergency pay for essential employees who have been showing up to work daily during this crisis.

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the University System of Maryland (USM) have often been slow to react, and inadequately prepared. This has left workers on the frontline without the resources they need to effectively fight the virus, and Marylanders in need of public services unable to access them. Reopening workplaces is far more complex than closing them and it is imperative that occupational health and safety regulations, procedure's, and systems provide the basis for return to work, as well as in situations where work has continued.

In these documents, we outline the necessary steps and best practices that all State Agencies and the USM need to follow to ensure that workers, those they serve, and their families stay safe during this pandemic. We also recognize the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 virus is having on black and brown communities in Maryland.

Check our website to download the full guide: [www.afscmemd.org](http://www.afscmemd.org)

## Police Communication Operators in Dept of Natural Resources Hold First Labor Management Committee

AFSCME Council 3 members held their first labor management committee with Police Communication Operators in the Department of Natural Resources. Throughout the pandemic, these members have continued to report despite being overlooked by management. All state workers have continued to report despite unfair working conditions like plastic shower curtains used to separate workers. Workers are excited to begin building power in their workplace. At the Labor Management Committee, workers and management sit as equals across each other in order to create a more productive and safer work environment. If you're interested in more information about Labor Management Committees, please email [info@afscmemd.org](mailto:info@afscmemd.org).

JUNE 9TH 2020

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## **BRIEFING ON THE AVAILABILITY AND SUITABILITY OF PPE FOR FRONTLINE STATE EMPLOYEES**

On June 9, the Maryland Senate Finance Committee and House Appropriations Committee held a briefing on how the state has been handling PPE during the Coronavirus pandemic. Hogan Administration officials from the Division of Corrections, Department of Health, Department of Juvenile Services and Department of Human Services testified to the numbers of PPE that had been acquired since the beginning of the pandemic. Their charts and numbers were made to impress, and the numbers themselves are impressive. But AFSCME members also testified and painted a picture of day-to-day reality that belied the rosy presentations of the Administration.

AFSCME Council 3 President Patrick Moran opened the AFSCME testimony, saying "Unfortunately, you will find that the state often took too long to respond to the challenges that laid before them, that they often did not address the issues we raised nor took the solutions that we were proposing to address those situations. To this day unfortunately there are departments and institutions that still have not addressed many of the basics that need to happen in order for the state to successfully take on this pandemic and ensure the safety of state employees and those that they serve."

Local 3167 President Denise Henderson (DJS) stated "At the beginning of the pandemic, we were informed that we would not be allowed to wear PPE unless the agency had evidence of a spread of COVID in our facilities. This made us feel anxious and scared, not being proactive but reactive affected the morale of the employees. Upon confirmation of a positive case, we were told that we could now wear PPE. Two to three weeks after the notification we still had areas within the agency that had not received proper cleaning supplies or PPE. As an essential employee you had to decide 'do I go to work and risk infection and support my co-workers? or do I stay home and keep my family and myself safe?'"

Local 266 member Donna Kilmore (MDH) added "If MDH truly wants its facilities to be a model for coping with COVID, they need to provide training, PPE, protocols, and planning to support all staff and patients. Staff need to have adequate pay and protection for risking their physical and mental health every day." Local 112 Treasurer and Council 3 Executive Board member Cherrish Vick (DHS) stated "Staff are unsure about the reopening procedures. We want to do our part to help folks who need our help. But again, without being supplied the necessary equipment and training, many of us are unable to do the work, work which could be done remotely."

Finally, Local 3641 Vice President Sean Santmyire (DOL) summed up AFSCME members frustrations, "(T)he shortage of trained staff who had the proper equipment and training has put many Maryland families without checks and without communication from the DOL. Because we have so many people not get through to a UI professional via email or phone, many cannot get answers of why they have not received their payments. Just in the western region alone men and woman who were released from their jobs at the Luke Mill, and are in various retraining programs, have gone without payments for several weeks now. Our governor promised these hardworking people that his administration would be there for them. In recent weeks and now going on months this promise has fallen by the wayside for these folks and so many others."