

# AFSCME 3 NEWSLETTER

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## RSVP For October Regional AFSCME Meetings

This October, AFSCME Council 3 will be hosting a series of Regional AFSCME Meetings to update members on the fight for a raise and respect for COVID-19 heroes and ongoing contract negotiations and legislative engagement. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings will be hosted on Zoom with options to call in.

RSVP for an upcoming meeting below and you will get an email with a link to join the meeting. Share this event with your co-workers so we can make sure as many members as possible get these updates!

**Southern Regional AFSCME Meeting Monday, Oct 4th, 6 pm**

**Central Regional AFSCME Meeting Monday, Oct 4th, 6 pm**

**Western Regional AFSCME Meeting Wednesday, Oct 6th, 6 pm**

**Eastern Regional AFSCME Meeting Thursday, Oct 7th, 6 pm**

Register online: <https://bit.ly/Oct2021RAM>

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## At Legislative Hearing AFSCME Members Testify on Lack of Basic Health and Safety Plan Within Higher Education

Legislators from the Senate Education, Business and Administration Subcommittee, and House Education and Economic Development Subcommittee held a briefing today to discuss higher education issues, with a specific focus on the fall reopening of campuses during COVID. Presenters included the University System of Maryland (USM), Saint Mary's College of Maryland, the Maryland Independent Colleges and Universities Association (MICUA), and AFSCME Council 3.

The USM presented numbers regarding the COVID compliance of the different campuses around the state. "Compliance" can mean vaccinated, religious exemption, or health exemption. Given each campus has a different definition of what an exemption entails, it is hard to compare numbers, though the USM did make a point of stating that the HBCU campuses were not as compliant. The USM also skimmed over the various steps they have taken (or not taken) regarding mitigating the spread of COVID-19.

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## At Legislative Hearing AFSCME Members Testify on Lack of Basic Health and Safety Plan Within Higher Education Continued

AFSCME Council 3 President Patrick Moran opened the union's presentation discussing a positive engagement with Morgan State University. AFSCME has represented Morgan State University employees for over 20 years - but it has only been in the last four years that employees have been able to make gains that make a real difference in their pocketbooks and in their lives. Morgan has agreed to raise the minimum wage for the campus employees to \$15 an hour, as well as converting many contractual workers to full-time employees with benefits such as health insurance and pensions. President Moran pointed out that unfortunately, the University System has not followed suit.

Instead of joining the State in ensuring a floor of \$15 an hour minimum for university employees, they have instead allowed each school to determine their own rate, leaving hundreds of University System employees below the \$15 per hour wage. AFSCME has repeatedly attempted to engage the USM in negotiations over wages, health and safety, and other pressing issues, which is why we are fighting so hard to create consolidated bargaining with the university system through legislation that was passed this last legislative session but vetoed by Governor Hogan.

AFSCME Local 1072 Executive Board member Celina Sargusingh also presented, providing a compelling story centered on the lack of basic health and safety protocols during this ongoing pandemic; receiving no hazard pay despite working in consistently hazardous conditions at the Health Center at College Park; having to work side by side with contractual employees that actually made more money than she does; and describing the ongoing fight to win fair and just telework policies, as well as paid administrative leave when employees have to take time off because of COVID sickness, or exposure to COVID.

Celina stated "Supervisors are telling employees they must use their own personal time to quarantine. Telework as an option is being used less and less despite going a full year teleworking for many. There is no COVID administrative leave with pay. If an employee must quarantine and doesn't have enough leave, then it becomes leave without pay - through no fault of their own." Sargusingh ended her presentation with "(w)e have a lot of work to do to make the USM fair, safe, and equitable for the people that they (the USM) need to run their day-to-day operations. We appreciate the committee's continued interest in the work of our members and holding the universities accountable."

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SEPTEMBER 16TH, 2021

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## AFSCME Members Plan to Fight Back Against Proposed MDH Facility Closures

On Thursday, Sept. 2, 2021, MDH Secretary Dennis Schrader and the Hogan Administration released a Master Facility Plan detailing recommendations for the 11 facilities MDH currently operates statewide including transitioning services and closing the Deer's Head Hospital Center and the Western Maryland Hospital Center. As a union, we've been here before. In 2016, when the Governor announced privatization plans at WMHC, Springfield, and the RICAs we came together and pushed back to defeat those plans. WE can do it again.

Yesterday, over 60 union members from both facilities came together to plan the next step in our fight to stop these proposed closures! Join the Save Western Maryland Hospital Center/Deers Head Hospital Center by emailing your name and facility to [info@afscmemd.org](mailto:info@afscmemd.org). We will be scheduling the first meeting within the next week so we plan how to fight back!

Under the proposed plan, MDH privatizes services at 5 state facilities over the next 20 years and establishes four "regional service" centers. This plan reduces the overall bed capacity and staff to even lower levels than the MDH currently has. In total, the plan is estimated to save the state \$321 Million over 20 years, or the equivalent of roughly .007% of the total operating budget for Maryland each year.

It is unclear what path this plan will take. MDH has said that "legislators will have a say" but it is not clear what "having a say" means. It is our job to engage with stakeholders and convince them that they need to speak up because MDH's plan is a bad one.

We need to create a crisis for the people who want to see this hospital closed. We cause this crisis by making sure that people understand the truth about the importance of the work that goes on here and why it's important that this hospital remains open in its present form. We provide excellent care, as has been demonstrated throughout this pandemic and the relatively few outbreaks we had compared to private facilities in our area.

Our patients depend on us to give them long-term care for their chronic conditions. Their care will still be needed after they close our hospital, the state just wants to drive down the wages and benefits for workers who do this by moving the work over to the private sector. That's not right. Our patients deserve better, and those of us who do this tough work deserve better.

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SEPTEMBER 16TH, 2021

# AFSCME 3 NEWSLETTER

## RSVP to Fight For a Raise

Meet us at State Center, 301 W. Preston St, for a march and rally with our community and legislative allies to demand the raise Council 3 COVID-19 heroes deserve!

Masks will be required and social distancing will be in effect.

Commit to attend our rally on Wednesday, October 20th at 6pm

<https://bit.ly/October20Rally>

## STAND WITH COUNCIL 3 COVID-19 HEROES



### 6PM WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 20TH

AFSCME 3 members have been on the frontline of this pandemic to support and protect all Marylanders. AFSCME 3 members are COVID-19 heroes.

Join AFSCME 3 and partners as we fight to get what our COVID-19 Heroes deserve:

- Living Wages
- Fix and expand collective bargaining

