



National Council of HUD Locals – Council 222

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AFFILIATED WITH AFL-CIO,
WE ARE COMPRISED OF HUD LOCALS THROUGHOUT THE U.S.

<http://www.afgecouncil222.com>

May 17, 2022

Council 222 Demands Bargaining Unit Employees' Health and Safety To Be Safeguarded at HUD

Dear Bargaining Unit Employees

AFGE Council 222 calls on Secretary Marcia Fudge and Deputy Secretary Adrienne Todman to take action to really protect our Bargaining Unit Employees as we approach another rising of COVID cases around the country.

As you already know, Managers across the country are basing safety protocols in the office by the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force COVID-19 Workplace Safety guidelines for mask-wearing and additional measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 illness are determined based on the CDC's COVID-19 Community Levels for the county in which a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD or the Department) office sits.

Within one week, 3 HUD New York City HUD Employees who are fully vaccinated contracted COVID-19 in an office that had less than 1/4 of its workforce in the office. We don't know how many employees nationwide have contracted COVID 19 by Management unilaterally deciding to have employees come to work 2 days per pay period. This is a dangerous game the CDC and Safer Federal Workforce Task Force is playing with the real-world consequences of exposing employees to more risk of contracting COVID-19 at the HUD Offices. And HUD Management continues to rely on this dangerous misinformation.

Simply put, why are we bound by "GUIDANCE"? The answer is we don't have to be. For the past 6 months our Council has been in negotiations for a Hybrid Working Environment including Remote work and Expanded Telework. After six months we are still in negotiations over a safer workplace. The Union continues to argue that is not bound by CDC's and Safer Federal Workforce Task Force's "guidance". It is discretionary for the continuation of return to safe workplace/office safety protocols negotiations. The Union wants a safe work environment based on reality, not guidance. As an example, we've been arguing for better personal protective equipment, commonly referred to as PPE, a critical component in reducing the spread of COVID-19 to be provided in offices. Instead, Management's Negotiation Team continues to say it's "not comfortable" to go above and beyond what other Agencies are doing. Management's negotiation team even says PPEs must go by the CDC and Safety Federal Workforce Taskforce and what the agency can afford in its budget. This is nonsense. To count nickels and dimes over PPEs is dangerous.

Yet unfortunately we're still at impasse over negotiations for a Safer Workplace.

I also call on Secretary Fudge and Deputy Secretary Todman to immediately implement Remote Work and Expanded Telework. There is no reason to delay and have Management make arbitrary and capricious decisions on what positions deserve remote work.

For two and a half years our employees have successfully met HUD's mission by working remotely. The Secretary herself has thanked everyone for their hard work in accomplishing HUD's mission. An IG audit stated that productivity increased by employees working from home full time. Yet Management's negotiating team says the Agency did not meet its mission in the past two and half years.

Secretary Fudge and Deputy Secretary Todman, there are individuals undermining both of you. I request that you take a serious look at the OCHO and ELR staff from a past Administration who are on Management's Negotiation Team.

Sincerely,
Salvatore Viola
President
American Federation of Government Employees
National Council of HUD Locals

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