



STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION OF NORTH CAROLINA, INC.

April 4, 2020

Dear Governor Cooper, Senator Berger and Speaker Moore,

The State Employees Association of North Carolina thanks each of you for setting aside your political differences and working together to help our state survive the Coronavirus crisis. We applaud the many bipartisan steps you have taken to slow the spread of the virus and protect our state's most vulnerable: addressing testing and scheduling in the public schools, extending the tax filing deadline, and forgiving penalties and interest on late filers are just a few of your actions that give families the relief and flexibility they need in this perilous time. Your approach represents the best of North Carolina state government and it is what the citizens of our state expect from our leaders in times of crisis.

On behalf of North Carolina's state employees and retirees, we respectfully ask you to extend this approach to our state's workforce and join together in bipartisan support of two policies crucial to protecting the public health, the health of state workers, and the critical services our state employees deliver every day.

First, we implore Governor Cooper to use the authority granted to him in § 166A-19.30. (a) (1) and (2) and § 166A-19.10 (b) (2) to provide hazard pay equal to time-and-a-half for the duration of the state of emergency to state workers in essential jobs where social distancing is impossible or impractical. This has become standard practice with essential private sector jobs in retail and grocery stores (Harris Teeter recently announced its "Hero Bonus" for hourly workers), and both President Trump and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer are considering hazard pay for various healthcare sector employees. In North Carolina, hazard pay for our state employees should cover, at a minimum, workers within the walls of our state prisons, workers at state mental health and drug treatment facilities, parole and probation officers, the State Highway Patrol and workers in the unemployment section of the Employment Security Commission. Additionally, workers in these essential jobs should be provided special sick leave that won't count against their normal sick leave if they are infected with COVID-19 on the job. We ask Senator Berger and Speaker Moore to commit to sending Governor Cooper a clean appropriations bill covering the costs associated with these measures as soon as the legislature returns to session.

Second, we encourage Governor Cooper, Senator Berger and Speaker Moore to work together to allow all non-essential state government workers to work from home for the duration of the emergency, to limit the risk of public contagion and to ensure non-essential government functions are maintained. We continue to hear reports from our members that departments and supervisors are prohibiting state workers from working from home, continuing to require non-essential state workers who could work from home to come into workplaces where social distancing is impossible. This creates an unacceptable risk of COVID-19 transmission within the state government workforce. Worse, this policy creates a serious risk to public health and exacerbates the impending hospital bed shortage by facilitating additional community transmission of COVID-19 across the state.

We appreciate your leadership during this crisis and hope you will act swiftly on these two requests, to protect the public health and ensure our state's committed and dedicated workforce continues to deliver essential services to the people of North Carolina.

Thank you,

Ardis Watkins
SEANC Executive Director