

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
One strong united voice for Minnesota workers

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Honorable Members of the Frontline Worker Pay Working Group,

AFSCME Council 5 represents 43,000 workers across the state in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. Thousands of our members are essential workers (as defined in Minnesota Statute) in nursing homes, Veterans' homes, correctional facilities, Direct Care and Treatment facilities, schools, hospitals, medical clinics and other workplaces open to the public. They bravely worked throughout the pandemic, putting their lives, and the lives of their families, at risk; they all deserve compensation which recognizes and respects the sacrifices they made to keep our state moving forward.

Though we appreciate the budget agreement which established this working group and pledged \$250 million to frontline workers, we are troubled by the reality that this amount will not be enough to adequately reflect the sacrifices made by so many workers.

Workers that fall under this group's guidelines appear to number somewhere between 900,000 and 1 million individuals. If every one of them were to receive a one-time check from the state, it could be as small as \$250, wholly inadequate compared to their sacrifices. On the other end of the spectrum, if this group narrows down the recommendation to 250,000 workers, it will mean a supermajority of frontline workers will receive nothing, along with the indignity of having their work being deemed to be something less than someone else.

We know all work matters, and all workers matter, and we strive to honor the work of our members as well as all others who worked on the frontlines for the past year and a half. We urge that you recommend the frontline worker fund increase in size so everyone whose job placed them at risk of contracting COVID, day-in and day-out, would be recognized appropriately.

We understand that the task of this working group will be profoundly challenging. Everyone who comes before you will deserve something. Everyone will have experienced hardship and loss, and most will not have received any kind of financial compensation that reflects what they have gone through. The success of your work here hinges on increasing the amount in the Frontline Worker Fund.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Bleyhl".

Julie Bleyhl, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ethan Vogel".

Ethan Vogel, Legislative Director -