

August 11, 2021

Frontline Worker Pay Working Group
72 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair and Members of the Working Group:

I am a licensed teacher and an employee of a Minnesota charter school. I have an online commitment from 12:30-2pm, but I would like to address the committee remotely, if possible, between noon and 12:30. If not, please consider this letter my written comments.

Because of the worker shortage in many fields, I urge the Working Group to make the Frontline Worker Pay prospective. Whatever occupations the Working Group chooses to compensate, there should be a future date (say, October 1, 2022) that would determine whether or how much they receive. If a person is employed as a frontline worker through that date, they would receive a greater payment. When the pay contains an incentive for future behavior, rather than just a reward for past behavior, some of the unfairness in distributing the money is alleviated.

It is also important to means-test the payments. The money should go to those who could not have afforded to quit their jobs, despite the safety risks.

I would caution the Working Group against saying that, among similar occupations, one is more important than the other. For example, both grocery stores and liquor stores stayed open throughout the pandemic. Clerks in both types of businesses did similar jobs and faced similar risks. In distinguishing who should get the payments, I would again recommend that the Working Group look to where the worker shortages are and make the eligibility prospective.

In short, I recommend the Working Group make eligibility for the payments prospective, based on where the worker shortages are, and to means-test the payments.

Sincerely,

Peter A. Swanson
semipermanent@hotmail.com