

September 1, 2021

Representative Ryan Winkler, Chair

Senator Karin Housley, Chair

Frontline Worker Pay Working Group

**Re: Frontline Emergency Shelter and Supportive Housing Workers**

Chair Winkler, Chair Housley, and Members of the Frontline Worker Pay Working Group:

My name is Joseph Musco. I'm a Registered Nurse. These views are mine alone.

I believe the entirety of the allotted funds for Frontline Workers should be devoted to creating two paid leave days for all working Minnesotans, paid at minimum wage (including part-time workers and prorated to FTE). Our State Legislature and Governor could then, united, create the first paid leave in the State of Minnesota. These two paid leave days could be sunset at the end the pandemic or be extended as the need and support for such a program dictate.

I further suggest the concurrent establishment of a Statewide Leave Pool, where Minnesotans could donate their unused leave time & pay to other Minnesotans. Rules for the pool should be simple and assume trust and good intentions for all involved. Leave time could be used to rest after COVID-19 vaccination, look out for somebody recovering from COVID-19, to care for a family or community member, or for any purpose. Trust people on how to use their own time. I believe those Minnesotans with money and security do not need a few extra dollars from this program. Minnesotans without money and security are not particularly lifted by a small one-time reward in the middle of a pandemic. They are lifted through their own health and dignity.

Two days of paid leave at minimum wage supports that health and dignity.

The Frontline is everywhere, in every home, in every family and community. Providing two paid leave days for all Minnesotans, even for only one year, would be the best way to recognize that we are all in this pandemic together and that moving forward, together we can thrive.

Thank you,

Joseph Musco

Minneapolis, MN

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## My Frontline COVID-19 Experience:

November 2020 to Present: I have been working for Dakota County Public Health in Disease Prevention and Control. I've worked almost exclusively on COVID-19 vaccine clinic planning, implementation, and operations. I've been involved in every role imaginable from distributing vaccine to partners in the Phase 1a First Priority to being post-vaccination monitor for the very first Phase 1a Second Priority frontline workers. I've been a vaccinator, lead vaccinator, vaccine lead, clinic lead, and Incident Commander. I've transported, swapped, or consulted about vaccine in four counties. I've been a co-lead in our Homebound vaccination program from the outset of the program, reaching people who have limitations on leaving their homes to attend a vaccine clinic. I've been a part of clinics or vaccine distribution that have helped vaccinate roughly 70,000 people. I work with some of the most brilliant dedicated public servants in public health that you would ever want to find. Good eggs one and all. Public Health is the best investment government can make for health and wealth of its people. As Casey Stengel said, [You Could Look It Up](#).

April 2020 to November 2020: Bethesda COVID. At the outset of the pandemic, I was an RN at Fairview Riverside in Inpatient Adult Behavioral Health. I volunteered and deployed to Bethesda COVID when the first call went out. I used to work with ventilator patients at Benedictine Health Center of Minneapolis, I've trained and deployed as a Hennepin Medical Reserve Corps volunteer with infectious diseases, I've had some Disaster Medical Assistance Team training at the federal level - I thought I might be useful. I also knew selfishly that the University of Minnesota would have the best resources at Bethesda to protect me (and my family at home) in a dangerously uncertain situation. Not everybody had those resources. I deployed from start to close of operations at Bethesda on the medical units. The backbone of the COVID hospital was the original staff from what used to be the Long-Term Acute Care hospital at Bethesda. The patience and resolve of that LTAC staff, the exceptional bedside care, the immaculately clean units, the skill and resolve of the Bethesda LTAC nurses – it was just what was needed in the moment. The Bethesda nurse aides, storekeepers, and housekeepers were all rocks. And it wasn't just the core staff from the LTAC, everybody that worked that worked at Bethesda COVID from the outset deserves a medal, or at least a hot dog at a Saints game. And the ICU team...strength and skill in a storm like you've never seen. I want to be them when I grow up.