



**PHILADELPHIA**  
*FEDERATION of TEACHERS*

Jerry T. Jordan, President  
1816 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Via electronic transmission

March 20, 2020

Dear Senators and Representatives:

I thank you for every effort you have made thus far in order to support Pennsylvania residents in these extraordinary times. It is my great hope that our collective efforts will be instrumental in not only flattening the curve of COVID19, but also in supporting the needs of every resident of our great Commonwealth.

Earlier this week, a coalition including our state organization, AFT Pennsylvania, signed on to a [letter](#) urging the Pennsylvania legislature to swiftly enact legislation that would provide clarification and recourse for a number of education-related issues emerging as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

In the time since the letter was shared, Secretary Rivera announced the cancellation of Pennsylvania standardized assessments this year. This is a huge step forward and an important reflection of the severity of this crisis.

As we move forward, we urge the legislature to adopt a holistic approach to addressing the COVID-19 crisis. To that end, we continue to support school related proposals, as well as the broader demands of workers across all sectors.

**We urge the legislature to adopt school related legislation that accomplishes the following:**

- Codify the waiver of the 180-day school year requirement.
- Increase the number of flexible instructional days permissible during this pandemic closure to a number determined by the secretary.
- Authorize the secretary to waive NOCTI and NIMS exams for Career and Technical Education students.
- Ensure all employees, including but not limited to teachers, support personnel, nurses, maintenance and custodial staff, and all District employees, have continuity in their pay and are not subject to any reduction in pay, layoffs, or furloughs associated with the COVID crisis.
- Ensure no employee receives more or less credit or contributes more or less than they otherwise would have pursuant to the Public-School Employees' Retirement System under 24 Pa.C.S. Pt. I.

- Ensure that school entities provide proper protective gear for custodians who provide deep cleaning of potentially infected school buildings.
- Waive the twelve-week student teacher requirement.
- Enact a moratorium on charter expansion; we've already seen efforts on the part of school 'choice' groups trying to monetize this crisis. It is essential that legislative action prevent the use of this crisis as a means of further diverting money and resources from our public schools.

Further, we urge the General Assembly to adopt comprehensive legislation to address the potential for devastating effects on all Pennsylvanians, particularly the most vulnerable among us.

**To that end, the PFT is in full support of the demands laid out in the [Working Family Relief Action plan](#), summarized here:**

- EXPANDED HEALTHCARE ACCESS: including fully paid leave for ANY COVID-19 related issue, including sick time, furlough, self-quarantine, and providing care to infected family members;
- ECONOMIC RELIEF FOR WORKING FAMILIES: including doubling unemployment benefits, eliminating the two week waiting period;
- PROTECTING FRONTLINE WORKERS: including emergency funding and standards healthcare workers, direct support professionals, and first responders; and
- MAINTAINING OUR VALUES and VOICE by mailing all voters a ballot with postage paid return, and expanding resources to investigate attacks on AAPI communities.

In these unprecedented times, our bold and unified action is more important than ever. I am happy to answer any questions you may have or offer further clarification or insight onto any of the issues I have shared.

Thank you in advance.

Yours truly,



Jerry T. Jordan

cc: Governor Tom Wolf  
Secretary Pedro Rivera  
Mayor James F. Kenney