

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, and
Minority Leader Schumer:

As elected officials from many states and cities, we commend you on your leadership in providing relief to millions of workers impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency. While in our home jurisdictions, we are doing everything we can to help vulnerable workers, the scope of the emergency exceeds our ability to provide comprehensive relief. So, we are pleased that discussions have begun on the next phase of legislation and are writing to ask that you protect property service workers who are keeping the nation moving in this time of crisis.

Property service workers have been declared to be essential in numerous state and city “stay-at-home” and “shelter-in-place” orders, and for good reason. The duties of property service workers (building cleaners, security officers, residential service workers, contracted airport service workers, cafeteria workers, and parking workers and others) are critically important so that the public can stay healthy and our buildings and facilities can stay safe for the duration of the crisis.

Essential property service workers cannot weather periods of time without work, but at the same time, neither can we continue to allow them to face the risks associated with continuing to do their work during a pandemic without proper protection and compensation.

In order for our nation’s economy to be able to spring back into recovery, it will be important that commercial office buildings, educational facilities, airports, multi-family residential buildings, and other buildings and facilities are fully functioning, sanitary, secure, and in good repair once the health crisis passes. It is not possible for property service workers to perform their duties remotely and they brave long commutes to fulfil their responsibilities – often without essential personal protective equipment, such as gloves and masks. At some locations, where operations have ceased or business has slowed, the property service workers are being laid off.

These layoffs are devastating to these workers: they face losing their health insurance and their connection to employment. The layoffs will also have a disastrous effect on our ability to get buildings up and running as smoothly and efficiently as possible once the pandemic has passed. To address these urgent concerns, we are asking that you include protections for these workers in recovery legislation by including the following provision:

1. Essential pay and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for essential property service workers.
 - Essential pay at 1.5 times their regular rate of pay, supported by payroll tax credits available to employers of essential property service workers.
 - PPE for essential workers. At minimum property service workers should be provided with masks and gloves. In no instance should workers be prohibited or discouraged from wearing masks and gloves.
2. Contracted worker-centered economic relief and stimulus: keep contracted and subcontracted property service workers on payroll, and maintain any health benefits they normally are provided.
 - Establish a fund for private sector janitorial and security contractors modeled on the airline contractor funding the CARES Act to maintain wages and healthcare so that these facilities are prepared to quickly get the economy up and running. This will also alleviate the strain on overburdened state unemployment insurance programs.
 - Mandate that Federal Agencies use money previously appropriated to keep property service workers on payroll. The CARES Act authorized this, but did not require it.
 - Ensure that assistance to schools, higher education institutions, transportation authorities, states and localities include specific provisions and funds to keep contracted cleaners, security officers, and cafeteria workers on payroll.
 - Ensure there is sufficient money airline contractors fund established by the CARES Act to ensure airline contractors can meet their obligations to keep workers employed with no reduction in compensation.
3. Sectoral Bargaining at Transit Hubs. Require public agencies and authorities receiving assistance to develop a structure overseen by the agency or authority to bring together worker and employer representatives to negotiate important workplace standards, including: wages, health insurance and other benefits, scheduling, training, and staffing levels.

We ask that these measures to protect essential property service workers are given a high priority in the next relief bill. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to supporting our working families through this crisis.

Sincerely,

Bob Duff, Majority Leader, Connecticut State Senate
Derek Slap, Connecticut State Senate
Douglas McCroy, Connecticut State Senate
John Fonfara, Connecticut State Senate
Julie Kushner, Connecticut State Senate
Matthew Lesser, Connecticut State Senate
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