



Transport Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO

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March 19, 2020

Dear TWU local leaders and members,

As we all continue to grapple with the unprecedented public health and economic crises caused by the coronavirus, I wanted to reach out to brief you on the efforts which the International has been making on behalf of our members' health, safety, and economic welfare.

I know many of you are on the frontlines working heroically to keep transit systems, airlines, railroads, and other employers moving, potentially putting you and your families health at risk. Many of our members are facing extremely stressful economic difficulties as well, such as in our school bus workforce and beyond. Many more will face furloughs as the economy continues to be devastated by this calamity.

This is a unique experience for all of us. We are in completely uncharted territory. However, I want to assure you that the TWU leadership and staff are doing everything within our power to help mitigate the health and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on our members and your families.

Here is an overview of the TWU International's actions on the coronavirus to date.

MEMBER ASSISTANCE AND ADVOCACY

Monitoring employers' health and safety protocols: We have set up an email (Health@twu.org) for local leaders to submit information about health and safety protocols implemented by employers. We are comparing these protocols and responding as needed. We encourage all local leadership to share coronavirus information from your employers with the TWU International.

We are actively participating in the AFL-CIO COVID-19 Affiliate Working Group, through which unions are sharing pertinent information about health and safety protocols. We are working to get the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to issue coronavirus fact sheets that deal directly with work groups represented by TWU.

Assisting TWU state conferences and locals with employer issues: At the request of locals and state conferences, we are helping to address any concerns related to employers who are not engaging with the TWU in efforts to protect workers from the coronavirus. For example, we are:

- ❖ **Assisting JetBlue flight attendants** who may have been exposed to COVID-19. We are serving as intermediaries with company management to get answers to our members' questions.
- ❖ **Fighting for our members at Columbia University and Hudson-Bergen Light Rail** who reported they were receiving little information or equipment to help protect them from the coronavirus as they carry out their essential operations, maintenance, custodial, and security duties.
- ❖ **Supporting our locals in New York** in their ongoing efforts to defend school bus industry workers.
- ❖ **Protecting bikeshare workers** by helping our local leaders craft safety protocol demands to their employer, Motivate.

Keeping abreast of the latest pandemic-related news and policies: TWU staff are talking to and in meetings with the Trump administration and federal agencies, including the CDC, Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

Creating educational podcasts: The International is working with the TWU Air Division on podcasts that share important information about the coronavirus with our entire membership. The March 10 and 13 podcasts provide updates on medical, safety and legislative issues related to the pandemic. The next podcast will include interviews with medical professionals. (Search for "TWU Air Division" on your podcast app or go to [http://podcast.twu.org/.](http://podcast.twu.org/))

Providing unemployment insurance information: We are collecting unemployment insurance information to provide to members who need to apply for this vital benefit. The Department of Labor provides information here: www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/UnemploymentBenefits/find-unemployment-benefits.aspx.

POLITICAL/LEGISLATIVE

Economic stimulus: We are working to win the swift passage of federal economic stimulus legislation that will help U.S. industries most affected by the drop in demand for services, including airlines, commuter rail, public transit, and Amtrak.

We sent a "Call to Action" asking TWU activists to contact U.S. Senators and demand that they immediately pass a pro-worker coronavirus stimulus relief package for air, rail, and transit workers.

Emergency funding for hard-hit employers and industries: We are working with Congress to support emergency funding for industries in which TWU employees are employed. This includes:

- ❖ **\$58 billion for airline workers** - These funds would come with significant restrictions and federal oversight to ensure that *workers receive these funds*. TWU is seeking to guarantee that any airline that accepts this money:
 - Directs 100% to frontline workers;
 - Is prohibited from breaking union contracts through bankruptcy for at least five years from the end of the federal assistance; and

- Be prevented from increasing executive compensation, buying back stock, outsourcing work, or lobbying against worker protections at any level of government for at least five years from the date at which federal assistance ends.
- ❖ **\$16 billion for transit agencies including commuter rail** - This money would reimburse agencies for increased cleaning costs, lost fare revenue, etc.
- ❖ **\$700 million for Amtrak** - These funds would help the railroad make up for huge deficits caused by the coronavirus and to remain solvent and operational through 2020.
- ❖ Ensuring that funds provided to school districts can be used to **support school bus drivers, mechanics, and operations workers**.
- ❖ TWU is demanding that Congress ensure that **all emergency funds go to operations, specifically to frontline workers**.
- ❖ Further, we are fighting to make sure that any **emergency funds** provided to employers are **linked to labor protections** and that **none of the money be allowed to undermine existing collectively bargained agreements**.

Paid leave and other worker benefits: We are lobbying hard for HR 6201, a bill that includes:

- ❖ **Paid leave** for public employees, including transit, Amtrak, and public railroad employees, who are diagnosed or quarantined with COVID-19;
- ❖ **Paid leave** for public employees who are taking care of a child diagnosed or quarantined with COVID-19;
- ❖ Federally funded, **free testing** for individuals who may have been exposed to the coronavirus; and
- ❖ \$1 billion to help states better administer **unemployment insurance claims**, which are flooding into unemployment offices.

Because private sector workers at large companies (500 or more workers) have been exempted from HR 6201's paid leave requirements, we are fighting to **broaden the provisions of the bill to include all workers**. Unfortunately, this provision was removed from HR 6201 at the last minute by Treasury Secretary Mnuchin.

In addition, because the House neglected, due to process issues, to include the **railroad unemployment insurance program** in its bill, we are working on making sure this program is included in any stimulus package moving forward. We have received commitments from House and Senate leaders that this will be the case.

OSHA protections: We are fighting to include an emergency temporary standard from OSHA, which would require employers to implement new, more stringent safety standards for workers whose jobs put them at greatest risk of being exposed to the virus – including those employed in the public transportation, passenger rail, and airline industries. This provision also was eliminated by Secretary Mnuchin at the last minute.

Coordination with other unions: In all our lobbying efforts, TWU is coordinating with our fellow unions in our efforts to get Congress to move as quickly as possible to get money into the system and into workers' pockets.

COMMUNICATIONS

Disseminating information: Our communications team is collecting and disseminating a variety of informational documents related to workers' concerns over COVID-19 exposure, including via the TWU website, social media posts, and email blasts to the locals and the state conferences.

Facilitating political/legislative action: Our staff is engaging with members to update everyone about our work on Capitol Hill and encourage activists to participate in political action.

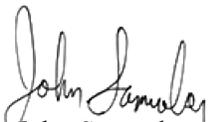
Fielding media requests: The TWU team is responding to numerous requests for interviews and comment from leadership and ensuring that our members' concerns are being publicized to a wide audience.

This is a very trying time for all our members, families, friends, co-workers, and communities. What we are experiencing now is truly unprecedented. Without question, many of us are feeling a great deal of stress due to the public health and economic threats presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

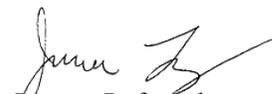
First and foremost, the TWU leadership is most concerned with the health and wellbeing of all our members, your families, and your friends. We encourage you to take every precaution possible to ensure you and your loved ones stay healthy. But, make no mistake, we also are 100% committed to doing everything possible to make sure all our members get the safety protections and financial support you need and deserve as quickly as possible. We will fight tirelessly to see that Congress acts to provide the economic stimulus that is needed and that these funds go directly to workers. In addition, we will see to it that employers do not exploit this crisis to undermine our collective bargaining agreements for which we have fought so hard.

We are here for you and encourage you to contact our leadership and our staff with any questions, concerns, or requests for assistance.

We are the TWU and we remain ***United Invincible***.


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