



March 13, 2020

Sent Via Email & U.S. Mail

Frank Kim
Chief Executive Officer
County of Orange
333 W. Santa Ana Blvd., Bldg. 10
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Mr. Kim:

As you know the Orange County Employees Association is the exclusive representative for over 10,000 employees who work for the County. Over the past few weeks, we have monitored the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic in the context of OCEA member safety and financial security. OCEA members interact with the public in multiple ways. For example, our members staff public counters, conduct home inspections and school visits, and provide one-on-one counseling, correctional medical services and public mental health services. In each instance County workers are at high risk of being exposed to COVID-19, and risk exposing their co-workers, friends and families to the virus.

Guidance from the state and federal government calls for reduced in-person meetings and “social distancing.” The County has a broad duty to provide a safe workplace, yet as of today has provided minimal direction or identified mitigation recommendations to protect front-line workers. Now, with school closures expanding hourly, employee anxiety about how the County will handle scheduling and work assignments going forward is rapidly escalating. We know many employers, public and private, have instituted worker-friendly policies in response to the pandemic and we expect the County to demonstrate similar leadership. Yet we are being flooded with calls and emails from members reporting that in every department and agency communication to rank and file workers has been non-existent. While their lives are changing right before their eyes, the message being sent to front-line workers is that “[I]t’s business as usual at the County of Orange.” This cannot continue. OCEA requests that the County implement at least the following mitigating actions immediately:

- **County-wide telecommuting options:** Directing each agency to identify workers who can perform their jobs from home, and providing the necessary equipment to workers to telecommute. Any worker impacted by a school closure and any employee in a high risk category should be allowed to telecommute if their position is conducive to telecommuting. If the position is not conducive to telecommuting, the worker should be permitted to elect to be placed on paid administrative leave. Consideration should be placed primarily on social isolation measures and not the convenience of implementing any telecommuting policy.

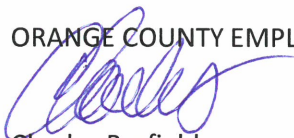
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- **Implement flexible work arrangements:** No County worker should be harmed financially because they are required to care for themselves or their families during this unprecedented crisis.
- **Sanitize and clean all public areas and workplaces:** Institute hospital-grade cleaning of all County facilities and public areas. Areas where workers come together in small spaces need to be properly sanitized to protect workers from the COVID-19 virus that experts say can live on surfaces for multiple days.
- **Eliminate all non-essential public interactions:** Close or reduce access to public buildings and counters to members of the public, and institute social distancing measures to comply with the Californian Public Health recommendations and guidelines.
- **Provide clear directives to workers potentially exposed to COVID-19:** County workers should be provided with clear directives about how to respond if they believe they have come into contact with the COVID-19 virus. Currently there are inconsistent and sometimes contradictory approaches depending on the workplace, or no direction at all.
- **Enhanced Protection for front-line workers infected with COVID-19:** If a County worker contracts the COVID-19 virus, the Countywide presumption should be that the infection occurred in connection with their County employment. This will provide a measure of financial protection for impacted workers and their families.

Exposing County workers needlessly to the COVID-19 virus without mitigating measures is dangerous to the overall health of our community. Please implement the above suggestions as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

ORANGE COUNTY EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION



Charles Barfield
General Manager

cc: OC Board of Supervisors (*Sent Via Email & U.S. Mail*)
Richard Sanchez (*Sent Via Email & U.S. Mail*)
Tom Hatch (*Sent Via Email & U.S. Mail*)