March 6, 2020

Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Chair
Labor/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee
2358B Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Senator
Health, Education, Labor & Pension Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro & Ranking Senator Murray:

On behalf of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), we are writing to applaud you for jointly authoring legislation that amends the Healthy Families Act (HFA) by providing for paid sick days for workers who are impacted by the coronavirus. As a union representing upwards of 90,000 workers, including tens of thousands of workers in states that have been hit hardest by the coronavirus, we thank you both for your swift action in introducing this bill.

As we can see from measures undertaken in nations throughout the world, it would not be surprising if local, state and the federal government took similar actions necessary to prevent the spread of the virus. Such measures could lead to workers being prevented to work for extended periods of time, as well as the closing of schools leaving working parents with the prospect of having to provide costly childcare or stay at home with their children during the workday. In fact, we have already seen this occurring in Washington State, where as many as a dozen schools have closed in the Seattle area and where employers are recommending that workers not come to work.

As you both are aware, many workers whose employers shut down for a period and are therefore out of work are not guaranteed a paycheck during that lost time. In fact, it is estimated that 27 percent of private sector workers are not guaranteed paid sick days. Most workers live paycheck to paycheck and the reality of missing paychecks means that families will have to decide between paying the rent or putting food on the table.

Because there is a lack of uniformity throughout the nation with respect to our labor laws when it comes to a national health emergency of this type, your legislation is not only timely, it also provides this protection for future public health emergencies. Specifically, your bill requires that employers permit workers to compile up to seven days of paid sick leave, while also providing for another 14 days of immediate paid sick leave upon an occurrence of a public health crisis, including the coronavirus.

We applaud the Congress for moving quickly to pass a bill this week that provides $8 billion in funding to help our nation battle through this emergency. However, we also believe that there is also in need for legislation that will guarantee that no worker loses a paycheck because they are forced to stay home, which your bill goes a long way towards achieving. IFPTE thanks you for this legislation and is hopeful that it will be attain swift passage in both chambers of Congress.

Sincerely,

Paul Shearon  Matthew Biggs
President Secretary-Treasurer

Cc: U.S. House of Representatives
United States Senate