

FEDERAL WORKERS ALLIANCE

COLLECTIVELY REPRESENTING OVER 550,000 FEDERAL AND POSTAL WORKERS

September 13, 2022

Hon. Jack Reed, Chair
Armed Services Committee
U.S. Senate
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20510

Hon. Gary Peters, Chair
Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs Committee
U. S. Senate
724 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20510

Hon. Krysten Sinema, Chair
Subcommittee on Government Operations
and Border Management
U.S. Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20510

Hon. Adam Smith, Chair
Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Carolyn Maloney, Chair
Oversight and Government Reform
Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Gerald Connolly, Chair
Subcommittee on Government Operations
U.S. House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Continuing Alignment of DoD Emergency Telework Policy to OPM Guidance

Dear Chairman Reed, Chairman Peters, Chairwoman Sinema, Chairwoman Maloney, Chairman Smith, and Chairman Connolly:

We, the undersigned unions of the Federal Workers Alliance (FWA) are writing to bring to your attention an issue impacting thousands of our members who are employed by the Department of Defense (DOD). We are concerned that the DOD's effort to transition away from situational telework and back to traditional telework as a part of their return-to-site policies is having a negative impact on DOD civilian workers, particularly with respect to caring for their children or ailing family members.

On March 3, 2022, the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS) authored a memorandum informing DOD components and employees that the exception to the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) normal telework policy to, "allow their civilian employees to telework during an emergency with a child or other persons requiring care or supervision present at home", would be extended through September 30, 2022. The memo goes on to stipulate that OPM's "exception to the telework policy that requires employees to report to the worksite a minimum of two days per pay period is still in effect," and that the "exception will end when Components fully

complete workforce reentry in accordance with DoD policy or the President declares the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.”¹ Even though we are still facing a pandemic, many DOD components are nonetheless moving forward to complete and implement worksite reentry by September 30th, including doing away with the exception to OPM’s telework policy that forbids federal workers to telework with child or adult dependents requiring care.

As you can imagine, this is causing much angst and disruption among our members who are employed by the DOD. Many of these workers are single parents, or are caring for sick relatives, and have been doing while also performing their jobs all throughout the pandemic. While these workers can still request telework under OPM’s and the DOD’s normal telework policies, they will not be permitted to telework with their children or sick relatives after September 30th.

During this pandemic, federal workers who teleworked and those who worked in person stepped up to the plate to serve the public and agency mission without interruption. This includes federal workers who teleworked while caring for children and relatives and performed their duties exceptionally well. Reverting now to a telework policy that runs counter of a “family friendly” model employer would be disrespectful to these workers, needlessly disrupt their work and family lives, be counterproductive to productivity, and hamper DOD recruitment and retention as the policy would be out of step with telework flexibilities in the private sector.

As the Chairpersons of the Committees and Subcommittee overseeing DOD and federal workers issues, **we ask that you request the DOD continue to align with the current exception to OPM’s telework policy, which allows workers to continue to care for their children and sick loved ones.** Further, we request that you reach out to OPM and urge them to change their normal telework policy to allow for federal employees on telework to care for a child or adult requiring care at home. DOD employees have proven it worked during the pandemic and we have every reason to believe it will work well after the pandemic.

We thank you, in advance, for considering our request and our concerns. If you have any questions, contact FWA legislative co-chairs Faraz Khan at fkhan@ifpte.org or Steve Lenkart at slenkart@nffe.org.

Sincerely,

International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW)
International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)
National Association of Government Employees, SEIU (NAGE)
National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE)
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO (PASS)

¹ Daniel J. Hester, Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service, [Extension of Maximum Telework Flexibilities](#), Department of Defense Memorandum, March 3, 2022.