Good afternoon members of P&F and HHN Committees,

We are the Executive Board of Local 2634, Dane County Professional Social Workers. We are writing in that capacity to express concern about Covid-19 vaccine distribution. It has come to our attention that a small number clerical staff at Human Services Job Center and the entire staff at the DA's office has been or will be vaccinated by week's end. While everyone is deserving of the vaccine, there is not currently sufficient supply to make that happen. Therefore, priority should be given to those employees at the greatest risk of exposure due to their job duties. While we do not begrudge those employees who have taken advantage of the opportunities, we have great concerns about how those groups of non-emergency responders were prioritized. While the clerical staff at the Job Center does have frequent but brief interaction with the public, this is done behind Plexiglas, in a clean, controlled, well ventilated, large environment where people are required to wear masks and socially distance. Similarly, for those in the DA's office, many of them have been working exclusively from home and most of them have not had any client contact since the beginning of the pandemic. If contact has happened, it has been infrequent and has occurred in county offices that are clean and can be controlled where social distancing and mask wearing is mandated.

Meanwhile, we have numerous Social Workers (SW) and Program Leaders (PL) in Human Services who have been designated emergency responders who are having client contact. Some of those staff are having more client contact than others and should be prioritized due to the increased risk. From day one of this pandemic, SWs, especially those in the Initial Assessment (IA) unit have continued to have in-person contact with families to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable citizens in our communities. This contact has been in family homes, hotels, shelters, hospitals and other community settings. IA SWs are required to go into people's homes – an environment that is beyond our control, where social distancing is not possible and mask wearing and PPE use by family members cannot be mandated. There are often multiple people present in the home with children frequently climbing on SWs, seeking attention. IA SWs are also required to transport clients in their own vehicles. Many of our clients are engaging in high-risk behaviors that further increase SWs risk of exposure to this deadly virus. The assessment process requires SWs to be in people's homes and in close contact with them for well over an hour and requires them to meet with multiple families in a given day.

We are asking for transparency and for information about how these non-emergency responders were prioritized over our emergency responders who are at highest risk due to their job duties. We respectfully request that you advise Department Heads to seek input and work with the employees' elected leaders in the EGR to establish a plan for vaccine distribution that ensures those at the highest risk due to their job responsibilities receive the vaccine first.

Please feel free to contact us if you would like copies of communications sent to the Human Services staff about vaccine distribution at the Job Center or communication that was sent by the DA's office regarding vaccine distribution to their staff.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

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Local 2634 Leadership
Kate Gravel- President
- Vice President
Taina Nytes - Chief Steward
Simon Lo- Secretary
Colleen Alvey - Treasurer

Please note we are volunteers. If you do not receive a response within a few days please email us directly. Thank you for your understanding.