

March 31, 2020

Postmaster General Megan Brennan
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W.
Washington, DC 20260

Madam Secretary General:

On March 18, 2020, ProPublica released a report detailing accounts of U.S. Postal Service letter carriers being urged to continue working while exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.¹ A March 27th *Nation* article noted that despite exhibiting these symptoms, postal workers who were interviewed “uniformly” said “they can’t access any protective and sanitary supplies,” and others observed that “station management still hadn’t addressed the coronavirus in stand-up meetings.”²

I write in support of the nearly 85,000 postal employees and customers³ who believe these reports must be addressed and appropriately remedied by U.S. Postal Service leadership to protect employees and customers in the wake of an unprecedented public health crisis.

While there have been a number of positive steps taken by U.S. Postal Service leadership, such as the agreements made with the American Postal Workers Union on additional paid sick leave and dependent care leave related to COVID-19, employees still raise concerns over the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), such as hand sanitizer and gloves available to employees. Postal employees who work in retail post offices or the large mail processing facilities face a different, but equally concerning, set of challenges and needs to protect both themselves and postal customers. Rigid adherence to social distancing for co-workers and customers, and PPE usages such as plexiglass window shields at retail windows and face masks, are immediate steps the Postal Service should be taking at a minimum to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Finally, as postal workers begin to test positive for COVID-19, U.S. Postal Service leadership should make clear to their employees that their health comes first, by making COVID-19 leave easily available. At the same time, the Postal Service should specify to customers how they will adjust their delivery standards to ensure important and time-sensitive packages, like medication, are prioritized.

I ask that you provide a written response to the concerns raised in the letter, and to the following questions, no later than April 7, 2020:

¹ Jameel, Maryam. “Letter Carriers Say the Postal Service Pressured Them to Deliver Mail Despite Coronavirus Symptoms — and Often Without Hand Sanitizer.” *ProPublica*, March 18, 2020. Online at: <https://www.propublica.org/article/letter-carriers-say-the-postal-service-pressured-them-to-deliver-mail-despite-coronavirus-symptoms-and-often-without-hand-sanitizer>

² Bittle, Jake. “The Postal Service Is Breaking Down.” *The Nation*, March 27, 2020. Online at: <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/post-office-coronavirus/>

³ “USPS Must Ensure Rights and Safety for Employees and Customers During COVID-19 Pandemic.” Online at: <https://www.coworker.org/petitions/usps-must-ensure-rights-and-safety-for-employees-and-customers-during-covid-19-pandemic>

1. What precautions and preventative steps is the U.S. Postal Service taking to ensure employees aren't working while sick?
2. How will the U.S. Postal Service address scenarios where an employee must stay home to protect an immunocompromised family member?
3. How is the U.S. Postal Service instituting social distancing measures for its employees who are ineligible for telework?
4. How is the U.S. Postal Service instituting social distancing measures in its retail operations?
5. What is the U.S. Postal Service doing to procure more PPE? In the absence of PPE, what alternative protective measures is the U.S. Postal Service taking to guarantee the health and safety of its employees?
6. How will the U.S. Postal Service continue to ensure regular deliveries, especially to rural and remote communities, as more of their workforce takes sick leave due to COVID-19? Will deliveries such as medication or other emergency supplies be prioritized?

The U.S. Postal Service will continue to play an important role in our country's response to the COVID-19 crisis and our recovery efforts. As such, it is critical that you take concrete actions to ensure that your employees, who are the frontline of delivering these services, receive the support and resources they need to remain healthy and safe at work.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
U.S. Senator