

In Absence of Federal Action, AFSCME Members Step Up to Make Homemade PPE

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear: front line workers are essential. But in the face of unprecedented danger, the federal government has failed to protect these workers.

In the absence of drastic federal action, workers will go without the essential PPE they need - unless we pitch in to help. Across the region, Minnesotans are heeding the call to fill the gap left by federal inaction. Last week, Governor Tim Walz Homemade Mask Week, and thousands of masks were delivered to local fire departments across the state to be delivered to congregate living facilities.

"While homemade masks will not replace personal protective equipment, they go a long way in preventing the wearer's germs from infecting others," said Governor Walz.

Despite the many masks delivered last weekend, vulnerable neighbors and front-line workers still need PPE. Luckily, AFSCME members were ready to answer the call!

Destiny Dusosky, Council 5 Treasurer and member of Local 753 at St Cloud State University, and Judi Shurson of Local 2474 at HCMC, witness firsthand the desperate need for

masks and PPE. After hearing the struggles of Moose Lake Correction officers and all front line workers needing PPE, Dusosky used her 3-D printer to create comfortable headbands for her homemade masks where the elastic bands do not touch the wearer's ears.

"This is what we as union members are called to do," Dusosky said: "Act." But she needed more help to make and distribute the masks.

That is where Judi Shurson from Local 2474 came in. Dusosky, Shurson, and others broadened the distribution network to include correctional officers and hospital staff. So far, the members have made 150 masks and 400 ear guards, and will continue making more.

"These masks are made with love," said Shurson. "It's a way of giving a part of yourself to make others safe and healthy,"

In the Northland, Local 66 members who work as educational assistants in School District #709 (Duluth) are making and distributing PPE for their members. Not only are they making masks; they are also crafting t-shirts that create awareness and help others understand social distancing.



Local 66 members in ISD #709 use social distancing while they distribute homemade PPE to staff.

The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in our communities.

The Governor's Office has tips for making face masks. You can find them at mn.gov/covid19.

AFSCME Council 5's internal distribution network can ensure that any front line worker who needs some level of mask protection receives one. Want to keep making masks to benefit AFSCME members? Sign up with AFSCME Council 5's COVID-19 Volunteer Form at afscmemn.org and keep working to ensure your union family is safe and healthy.

Right now, thousands of public service workers in Minnesota are at risk. We need you to tell Congress to fund the front lines. Go to our website under the COVID-19 tab and go to "CALL TO ACTION" to contact your Members of Congress.

But in the meantime, we need your hands-on effort. Join us in making the PPE our members need! Individuals or locals are also encouraged to donate to this effort by writing a check to "AFSCME Council 5 COVID Fund."



One of the many masks made by AFSCME members to protect our front line workers.

RSVP Now for Online AFSCME Mental Health Summit

Over the past year, your union siblings have worked hard to convene Mental Health Summits to fight and advocate for higher standards, better service, and working conditions for all those affected with mental health issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic means that large in-person gatherings are no longer advisable. But now - more than ever - **we not only need to continue the work we've started, but make sure we are all connected.** This pandemic impacts every aspect of our world, and it is our goal to make sure mental healthcare services be prepared as they can during and after this crisis.

Join our next Online Mental Health Summit on Saturday, May 2, from 3:00 - 5:00 PM.

The meetings will be held over Zoom videoconferencing. Information for the meetings will pop-up after you RSVP. Please save this information!

After you RSVP, please **take a minute to fill out this COVID-19 Staff Self Triage System Questionnaire at afscmemn.org/COVID19.** This information will help us deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for the future. We need and value your input.

We can't wait to build power with you and work on the problems we face – together.

Governor Walz, U of M, and Mayo Clinic Announce Breakthrough in COVID-19 Testing

Representatives from the University of Minnesota, the Mayo Clinic, and representatives of the state's largest health care systems joined Governor Tim Walz to announce that their collaborative efforts have led to a breakthrough in the search for fast, affordable COVID-19 testing.

These efforts could test as many as 20,000 Minnesotans per day once the system is running at capacity. The increase in testing and tracing will help improve control of the COVID-19 epidemic and support the safe and science-based re-opening of businesses and our communities.

Leveraging the state's healthcare system means Minnesota could lead the nation - and perhaps even the world - in testing capacity.

Funded in part by \$36 million from the COVID-19 Minnesota Fund, partners will launch a statewide strategy to test all symptomatic people, isolate confirmed cases, and expand public health surveillance tools. A virtual command center will monitor daily testing needs and coordinate rapid responses to outbreaks.

At AFSCME Council 5, we're grateful for our members at all of the partner organizations who make this collaborative effort possible. Members at Hennepin Healthcare (HCMC) are doing amazing work by building out an infrastructure large enough to support testing and treatment on this scale.

Minnesotans have risen to the challenge. With careful preparation, diligent effort, and unity, we will get through this pandemic together.

Good Samaritan Home Workers in Local 636 reach Tentative Agreement

Local 636 workers on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic provide essential care to residents at the Good Samaritan Home in Robbinsdale.

This week, workers - some of whom have supported Good Samaritan residents for 20 years - reached a historic TA that made progress toward recognizing their essential work.

The TA includes wage increases and more holidays so workers can enjoy time with their loved ones. Workers also fought back against management's effort to restrict and reduce their safe and sick time - they held firm, and they won.

Congratulations, siblings!

Ramsey County Workers Recognized

County employees across the state are doing powerful and essential work to ensure that our neighbors continue to get the services they need through the COVID-19 pandemic. This week, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners honored that work with a proclamation honoring Ramsey County employees.

The proclamation states: "The County Board wishes to highlight all Ramsey County employees who are providing direct and essential services to the residents of the County during this pandemic through their compassion, expertise, steadfast commitment, and courage."

AFSCME Council 5 is proud of the essential contributions made by all our members, and we are grateful for the public recognition our members deserve.

Resources for Members

These days, things are changing quickly. Stay up to date on all the latest news by following AFSCME Council 5 on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Get new guidance, calls to action, and resources at afscmemn.org under the COVID-19 tab. We encourage all members to widely share the resources we have put on our website and social media.

Look for action alerts via email and text so you know when to take action to protect working families.