

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo  
Chairwoman, Health Subcommittee  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Eshoo:

On behalf of the 35,000 members of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 57, I applaud you for holding a hearing on “Health Care Lifeline: The Affordable Care Act and the COVID-19 Pandemic.” I request that this letter be including in the hearing record.

AFSCME Council 57 Local 101 members who work at the Santa Clara Valley Water District, Scotts Valley Water District and Lorenzo Valley Water District provide safe, clean water for Silicon Valley, Santa Cruz, and surrounding areas. Our Local 829 members make Menlo Park happen. The nearly 5,000 health and social service professionals’ members of Local 2620 across the state, are on the front lines helping families and communities build resilience during this unprecedented time of crisis. As many shelter-in-place, Council 57 members are at work on the front lines. They are bus drivers taking essential worker to their jobs, clinic nurses serving the uninsured, food service workers making sure students don’t go hungry, pulmonary rehabilitation therapists at Sequoia Hospital and social workers putting their lives at risk to support our communities and protect those in need during this economic, environmental and health crisis.

For Council 57 members, their work is not just a job, it is a calling. For example, Francesca Salazar, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, who works at a Parole Outpatient Clinic. She and her co-workers help paroles with serious mental health and medical conditions. Because of the budget shortfalls in California, her job, and the very existence of Parole Outpatient Clinics across the state were on the chopping block. For now, the vital mental health services she and others provide the state’s parolee population will continue. But the future is not certain given the increasing drop in state and local revenues.

Not all Council 57 members and the work they do have been spared. A few hundred of our members have been laid off. They work at cities, healthcare facilities, and school districts. No job is untouchable. But there are no guarantees because the steep drop in city, county and state revenues are widening holes in budgets. Furthermore, many of the anticipated layoffs have

not occurred but only due to large vacancy rates at many of these places, furloughs that have been enacted, hiring freezes that have been implemented, and negotiated early retirements.

Workers who have seen their family income drop because of lay-offs and reduced hours can find some peace of mind in knowing that their family will still be able to see a doctor, get a COVID-19 test and if needed hospital care thanks to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and California's expansion of Medi-Cal through the ACA. California's decision to have a special enrollment period for the ACA has been a game changer in the lives of those who have lost their health care coverage when they lost their jobs during the pandemic or have been impacted by the wild fires. The ACA and Medi-Cal are truly a lifeline during these difficult and uncertain times.

Chairwoman Eshoo we thank you for leading role in developing and championing the Heroes Act (H.R. 6800) and its nearly \$1 Trillion in much needed flexible funds for states, counties, and cities. The Heroes Act would also provide our state and counties with new federal funds by increasing the federal share for Medi-Cal by a total of 14 percentage points starting July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. Counties in California are required to fund part of the non-federal share of Medicaid so when the federal government pays more of Medicaid costs it reduces Medicaid costs for our county. These additional federal dollars can help keep Council 57 members on the job providing the services our communities' needs. These additional federal dollars make sure those who enroll in Medicaid do not see a cut back in their care or needed services. During this time of high unemployment, adding new federal Medicaid money to our county will also lift our local economy.

This relief is desperately needed if we are to get through COVID-19, wildfires, and the economic fallout from these emergencies. We urge you to keep fighting to help fund the workers on the frontlines of COVID-19 and providing the public services our community needs. Our members are ready to do what needs to be done to help our communities stay healthy, safe and to rebuild our economy. The challenges of COVID-19, wildfires, and threat of pink slips is not stopping Council 57 members from rolling up their sleeves and doing what needs to be done without hesitation. But they need Congress to give them the resources they need to do their jobs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Charles E. Allen', with a stylized, looping flourish at the end.

Charles E. Allen  
Executive Director  
AFSCME Council 57