



New York State  
**PUBLIC EMPLOYEES  
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**OFFICERS:**

January 4, 2021

Wayne Spence  
*President*

Kay Alison Wilkie  
*Secretary-Treasurer*

Sharon V. DeSilva  
Randi DiAntonio  
*Vice Presidents*

Commissioner Michael P. Hein  
New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance  
40 North Pearl Street  
Albany NY 12243

**REGIONAL  
COORDINATORS:**

Dear Commissioner Hein:

Michele Silsby  
*Region 1*

I write with urgency regarding the continued health and safety of PEF members employed by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA).

Andrew Puleo  
*Region 2*

*Vacant*  
*Region 3*

I realize that during this pandemic you have the difficult task of balancing many competing factors while ensuring continuity of operations at your agency. However, I must impress upon you the importance of hearing and meaningfully addressing the concerns of PEF members, because issues of employee safety and morale are also crucial to continuity of operations for years to come.

Roberta (Bobbi) Stafford  
*Region 4*

David Dubofsky  
*Region 5*

The biggest concern we hear from our members at OTDA is disappointment, fear and anger due to OTDA's lack of a resurgence plan to reduce density in its offices throughout the state. The seven-day average in New York is about to hit 8%. In the areas where we are seeing the highest density at OTDA offices, it is even higher. Buffalo (Niagara County) is over 12%, Endicott (Broome County) is closing in on 10% and Albany is at about 10%. Thankfully, Manhattan is less than 4%, but we are not yet at the point where we are seeing any effects from holiday gatherings, so that number may increase. PEF has asked for this information at both the local and statewide labor-management table, but has not yet received a response.

Victoria Stockton  
*Region 6 Advocate*  
*Region 6*

Virginia (Gini) Davey  
*Region 7*

Michael Blue  
*Region 8*

Diane Jaulus  
*Region 9*

Darlene Williams  
*Region 10*

Bernadette O'Connor  
*Region 11*

Nora Higgins  
*Region 12*

**TRUSTEES:**

Christopher Buman  
Jeanette Santos  
Maddie Shannon-Roberts

At the beginning of the pandemic, when the numbers were not nearly this high in some areas, OTDA dramatically reduced density in its offices in a variety of ways, such as allowing more staggered work schedules. Given the dramatic rise in cases, we ask that you work with PEF to identify and implement countermeasures to avoid further spread of COVID-19. Such countermeasures may include density reduction in areas that reach certain infection thresholds when a certain percentage of employees are infected, or when agency contact tracing cannot keep up with demand. It should also include voluntary testing as well as setting up an infrastructure to allow employees to receive the vaccine.

We are also hearing from our members in DDD that they continue to be concerned about the telecommuting roll out. We are pleased to hear that the program is being piloted in Manhattan and that the agency has worked hard to implement telecommuting as fast as technology will allow. We ask that you continue providing updates and information to staff at all OTDA offices on a regular basis so that they have the latest information. We also ask that you



consider a wider expansion of the telecommuting testing program to accommodate all regions in the State, especially those seeing rising COVID-19 rates.

Please know that PEF will continue to strenuously advocate for the safety and security of our members and will take every possible action to ensure that they and their families stay healthy and safe. Your prompt action is desperately needed and greatly appreciated. Do not hesitate to reach out should you wish to discuss further how we can work together to protect the employees, and PEF members, in OTDA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Spence". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Wayne Spence  
President