



March 13, 2020

William P. Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dale Cabaniss
Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20415

Dear Attorney General Barr and Director Cabaniss:

The DOJ Gender Equality Network, an employee-run advocacy organization with over 550 members across the Department of Justice, implores you to immediately authorize telework arrangements for qualified federal workers and take all other appropriate actions in the wake of the deadly COVID-19 outbreak.

The COVID-19 virus puts the health and safety of federal workers and their family members at risk, especially those age 60 or older, or with underlying ailments. As the federal government has documented, individuals can transmit COVID-19 even when they don't exhibit any symptoms. *See* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Indirect Virus Transmission in Cluster of COVID-19 Cases, Wenzhou, China, 2020 (anticipated June 2020), *available at* https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/6/20-0412_article.

The federal government must do more to protect its employees. For example, the Justice Department has not sufficiently addressed community spread in the Washington, D.C. Liberty Square Building, where two workers were diagnosed presumptive positive for COVID-19. This highlights how simply coming to work puts us all at risk. Although the Department cleaned select floors of the building after learning of each case, sanitizing some spaces will not prevent the spread of the virus when non-symptomatic workers return and contaminate them.

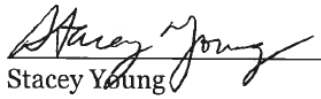
The best way to prevent us, our families, and the public from getting sick is to dramatically limit our exposure to the virus. Yet some agencies, like the Justice Department, have permitted telework only when we alone are at a high risk for infection, even when our family members have serious underlying health issues. For example, a federal employee whose spouse has a compromised immune system due to cancer treatment, and one whose adult parent living in the home has asthma, are not permitted to work from home. Instead, the current policies allow us to become possible vectors for the disease. This occurs when we travel to work (often on public transportation), when we interact with potentially infected colleagues in our offices, and when we


risk exposure again on our return trip home. Your response to this outbreak signals to federal workers that the spread of the disease, our health, and the health of our families are not priorities.

There are things you can do immediately to protect the health of federal workers, such as permitting and encouraging unrestricted telework for those who qualify, and allowing contractors to telework to the greatest extent possible.

The federal government is the nation's largest employer and the dominant employer in the Washington, D.C. region. As significant institutions across the country look for ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19, it is crucial for federal agencies to carry out their missions while also protecting their employees and the people they serve. We urge you to take appropriate action now.

Respectfully,


Stacey Young
DOJ GEN President


Melanie Krebs-Pilotti
DOJ GEN Vice-President

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