



March 26, 2020

Jeffrey A. Rosen  
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U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Lee Loftus  
Assistant Attorney General for Administration  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Deputy Attorney General Rosen and Assistant Attorney General Loftus:

The DOJ Gender Equality Network (DOJ GEN) is an employee-run advocacy organization with over 550 members across the Department of Justice. We write this letter to respectfully submit recommendations regarding telework, administrative leave, and communications about possible COVID-19 exposure that will provide support to Department workers and their families during this national emergency. We recognize the many challenges facing the Department during this difficult time, and we appreciate your continued efforts to help ensure that its workers can continue to perform their necessary work safely and without compromising the health of their families.

### **Encourage Maximum Telework Flexibility**

We ask the Department to strongly encourage, and in some cases mandate, telework in all components. We have heard about too many employees and contractors who continue to work in Department office space when it is not mission-critical. Furthermore, we are concerned that despite unified requests from government workers and the private bar to stop conducting in-person hearings, immigration courts throughout the country are requiring their continuation, leaving Department workers and the public vulnerable to contracting and spreading COVID-19.

We also ask that the Department move quickly to encourage maximum flexibility in telework, such as allowing for gliding and maxiflex schedules. Some components have created flexible policies, but others have not. We therefore ask the Department to ensure that all components implement clear guidance, including:

- Permitting workers to telework, even with children or other persons requiring care or supervision present at home; and
- Giving workers maximum flexibility in how they accrue their hours. For example, workers should be permitted to work intermittently and at any point, including nights and weekends.

## **Grant Administrative Leave Due to Caretaking Responsibilities**

We request that the Department grant up to 20 hours of administrative leave each pay period to workers who cannot complete their required hours due to caring for children during school or daycare closures, performing required hygiene or preventative measures, or for other personal/family issues related to COVID-19. Many of our members report that the current demands on workers in this situation are unsustainable, especially where states have mandated closure of school districts and daycare centers through the end of the school year. Other federal agencies, such as the Federal Trade Commission, Federal Communications Commission, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Government Accountability Office, Securities and Exchange Commission, and National Science Foundation have authorized their employees to take up to 20 hours of administrative leave per pay period for family and medical reasons. The needs of Department workers are no different, and we encourage the Justice Management Division to move quickly to permit such administrative leave.

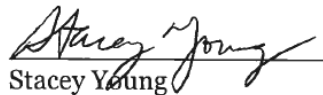
## **Increase Communications About Possible COVID-19 Exposure**


The Department should improve its communications about important health information. For example, our members have reported learning from social or news media about colleagues who tested positive for COVID-19 and were either never notified by management or were notified a week or more later. While we understand the important privacy concerns the Department must balance, any component can quickly notify workers who may have been at risk of exposure without identifying the specific individual who tested or is presumed positive for COVID-19.

We ask the Department to support its workers by encouraging flexible policies and making clear that telework, administrative leave, and other workplace flexibilities will continue to be available for as long as they are needed. We also ask the Department to set clear expectations that components will issue prompt communications to staff about possible COVID-19 exposure. We believe these policies will not only help protect workers' health and safety, but they will also help to ensure that Department workers are able to continue their important work.

DOJ GEN appreciates your commitment to the Department's most valuable asset—its workers. We urge you to adopt our suggestions for protecting them.

Respectfully,

  
Stacey Young  
DOJ GEN President

  
Melanie Krebs-Pilotti  
DOJ GEN Vice-President

cc: Monty Wilkinson, Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Human Resources  
Patrick Hovakimian, Associate Deputy Attorney General  
Rachel Bissex, Counsel to the Attorney General  
James McHenry, Director, Executive Office for Immigration Review