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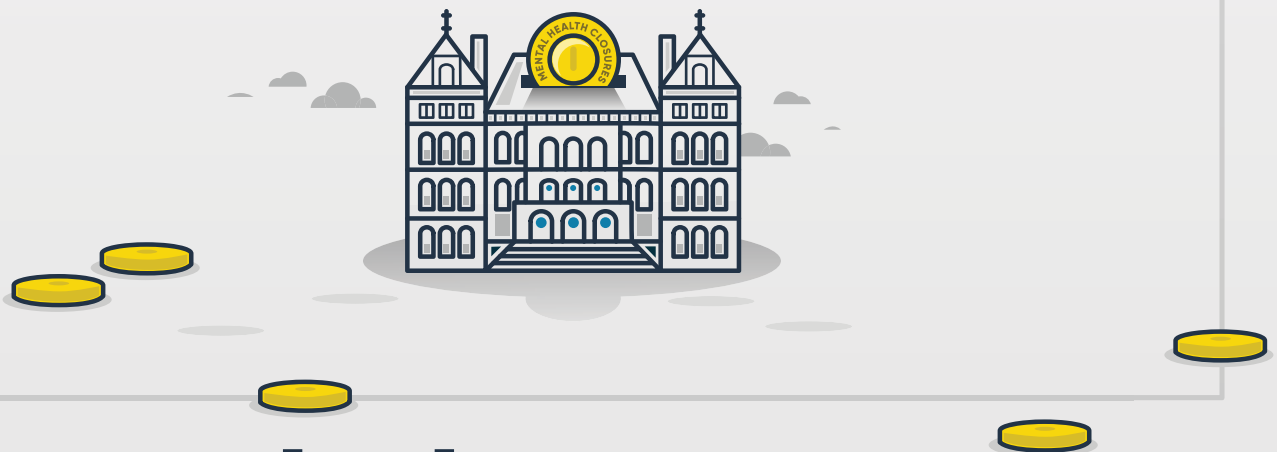


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The President's Message By WAYNE SPENCE



Don't Balance the Budget on the Backs of New Yorkers in Need

The budget battle is underway in Albany. It's a battle fought with words and numbers and arguments. And it's a battle we must fight, collectively, as one of the most powerful unions in the Empire State.

The New York State Legislature holds hearings throughout February as they consider Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget proposal. PEF leaders are busy drafting opposition memos and preparing written and verbal testimony to make our case for why the state should not try to balance its budget by removing the services and staff New Yorkers so desperately need. PEF has identified seven [2021 Budget Priorities](#) to focus on during the debate. They are: Bed reduction and facility closures at OMH, expedited closures of DOCCS and OCFS facilities, consolidation of OCFS facilities, reliance on expensive private consultants, defunding state hospitals, reducing retiree benefits, and recognizing COVID-19 heroes.

[We have created a place on our website](#) where members can go to make their voices heard on these issues. You can create a pre-written letter addressed to your state senator or assemblyperson, or you can download and print Word and PDF documents to personalize your letter and mail it to your representatives.

We must let Gov. Cuomo and lawmakers know that the middle of a pandemic is not the time for short-term fiscal savings when the long-term critical services provided by the state are at stake. The decisions in these budget proposals simply do not make sense. Why close Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center, forcing families to drive their vulnerable loved ones hundreds of miles to get the specialized care they need? Why give the governor the power to close prisons with just 90 days' notice? And why spend nearly \$1 billion on pricey, ineffective consultants to do the jobs PEF members have shown for years they can do better, and more efficiently? Those are just a few examples. There are many more.

Thank you in advance for your activism. I promise you we will be relentless in making our case that New York needs the services that PEF members provide now more than ever. I wish you and your families continued good health as we fight these budget battles, together.

In Unity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Spence". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Wayne Spence
PEF President

PEF needs members' voices to save state jobs, services

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

The state's hiring freeze took a toll on its workforce in 2020 and the governor's 2021-22 Executive Budget projects the loss of another 800 employees through continued attrition.

According to data from the state Department of Civil Service, the state has lost more than 4,000 employees since September 2019.

PEF has identified seven top [Budget Priorities](#) and is calling on all members to add their voices and their first-hand grasp of the issues in persuading state legislators to preserve services and maintain staffing.

The union's statewide Political Action Committee (PAC) is directing this effort and has worked with PEF legislative staff to provide information that has been sent to each of the regional PACs and all members. PEF also provided them with training via Zoom on how to set up virtual meetings with their state lawmakers to discuss these foundational priorities.

"Please use our list of [priority budget issues](#) and check out the suggested [letters to lawmakers](#) and then write to your Assembly member and Senator to express your concerns," PEF President Wayne Spence told members. "You have insights into how these proposals will affect the services you provide, and your legislators need to hear it from you."

"With the state facing a \$15 billion fiscal shortfall, 2021 calls for strong and swift measures to fund and maintain the quality public services that our members provide," PEF Vice President Randi DiAntonio said. "PEF is supporting several possible legislative measures that could help boost state revenues to offset the deficit."

DiAntonio and other PEF leaders are [testifying at state legislative hearings](#) on the budget to voice the union's positions.

The governor said his proposals are based on the assumption the state might only receive \$6 billion in federal aid to help close its budget gap, but he is calling on Congress to raise that amount to \$15 billion, which he says is only fair since New Yorkers pay far more in federal taxes than is returned to the state in federal aid.



The Biden administration is trying to get Congress to quickly pass an emergency pandemic aid bill that includes increased aid for state and local governments, as well as payments to people and small businesses devastated by shutdowns and restrictions aimed at reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Not only is PEF strongly opposed to further loss of state employees, it is fighting proposals to increase the state's reliance on private contractors that include extending the "design-build" concept at the state Office of Information Technology.

After spending more than \$1 billion in the current budget year on private service contractors and after years of an artificial 2 percent state budget cap, chronic underfunding and the ongoing attrition of state agency staff, the governor turned to state workers and directed them to put themselves at risk to fill the sudden breaches in service caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.



"Now, only months after describing PEF members and other state employees as heroes, the governor says the budget gap is forcing him to reduce, close, merge and consolidate the state services they provide," Spence said. "We are determined that this state, which has been relying on our members to get New Yorkers through this crisis, is not going to get away with throwing them under the bus to make up for fiscal shortfalls and then hand their work off to private contractors."

PEF has been sounding the alarm for years on the dangerous lack of nurses at many state health care facilities and the pandemic has brought that shortage into painfully sharp focus.

"We support a Nurse Employment, Enhancement and Dignity (NEED) Act that would provide hazardous duty pay and a \$500 annual tax credit for professional or practical nurses, nurse practitioners, or clinical nurse specialists," DiAntonio said., "It also would establish an education-related \$1,000 annual loan-forgiveness program for them, and preferential acceptance into educational programs required for licensure."

The budget also calls for closing state prisons and juvenile detention facilities and would put mental health facilities at risk of closing. PEF is working to educate lawmakers on how these changes run counter to public demands for better criminal justice and mental health services. Putting the state's resources into the staffing and programs that support these goals is the way to achieve them, not closing or handing them off to the private sector.

"This is a tough year and we need every PEF member informed and involved to make an effective case on these issues," Spence said. "Lawmakers recognize that our members are on the frontlines and have first-hand knowledge and experience to know what works and what doesn't. We all need to keep sharing our information with them."



2021 PEF Calendar

[Download Now](#)

PEF to Legislature: Don't privatize critical public mental health services; reconsider staffing cuts, facility closures

By KATE MOSTACCIO

In written testimony submitted to the Mental Health Joint Legislative Budget Hearing Committee February 5, President Wayne Spence urged the state to reconsider privatizing public mental health services, facility closures and staffing cuts proposed in the 2020-2021 Executive Budget.

PEF members in mental health congregate settings and public-facing offices working directly with COVID patients have borne a disproportionate burden in serving the state's neediest citizens during the pandemic.

"Unlike many of the essential employees in private industry, my members have received no recognition or remuneration for their selfless and dedicated service," Spence said. "In fact, this proposed budget seeks to privatize the critical public services they provide, relocate their jobs to other regions of the state, and cut the health insurance benefits that they have earned as faithful and dedicated public servants.

"The most egregious of these cuts and closures occurs in the state's already overburdened and undervalued programs that provide mental health services to New York's most vulnerable citizens," he wrote.

Spence said the state needs to develop greater capacity to deliver needed services and to address the current and future crises in a timely, efficient and cost-effective manner, which he argued can not be done with private contractors performing public services.

Closures of state facilities

The state proposes to privatize some mental health services and close several state facilities to help balance this year's budget. On the chopping block is Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center, targeted for closure.

"This nine-year-old facility provides intensive, individualized inpatient and residential treatment for mostly low-income children and youth with serious mental health issues," Spence wrote. "While the Executive Budget points to lower utilization,



Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center

staff indicate that they receive several calls daily from area hospitals to accept severely ill individuals on either an outpatient or residential basis."

With private providers strapped for resources, cases often fall to state facilities, Spence said. Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center covers Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Ulster, Dutchess and Westchester counties – if it closes, youth needing inpatient services would have to travel to the Bronx campus of New York City Children's Psychiatric Center for treatment.

"We cannot forget that the services provided by the state – especially those cost-intensive services rendered by OMH, OPWDD, OASAS and OCFS – are often the very last service option for people in serious crisis," he said. "Without those services being accessible in every region of the state, many of these people would be left untreated, increasing the chances of interactions with the criminal justice system and other state or local social services providers."



While the budget only specifically names Rockland Children’s Psychiatric Center, Spence noted the proposed budget also would authorize the Commissioner of Mental Health to unilaterally “close, consolidate, reduce, transfer or otherwise redesign services of hospitals, other facilities and programs operated by OMH and to implement significant reductions and reconfigurations.”

OMH has proposed seriously reducing beds and services across the state, including 292 inpatient, youth and forensic psychiatric beds – on top of the 99 beds eliminated in November and December of 2020.

“We urge the Legislature to reject this proposal, to maintain the continuity of services for the state’s most at-risk residents, and to require legislative oversight and authorization for any future facility closures, program consolidations and/or service reductions,” Spence wrote.

Proposed changes at OPWDD would separate families from staff they have come to rely on for sometimes years at a time.

“The budget also proposed to transition individuals with developmental disabilities in state-operated residences into voluntary-operated programs,” Spence stated. “This proposal, which is strictly advanced as a cost-saving measure, would separate clients and families from the staff who have cared for them for years.”

Disproportionate cuts to staff

In addition to facility and service cuts, Spence said this year’s proposed budget continues a decades-long policy of reducing staff at facilities that render services to the state’s most at-risk individuals.

“Under the budget proposal, staff will be reduced by 9 percent at OCFS and 3 percent at OMH from 2020 levels,” Spence wrote.



The testimony pointed out flaws of the state citing underutilization at facilities targeted for consolidation and closure.

COVID-19 has led to many individuals shying away from residential or other treatment for fear of contracting the virus. Additionally, management in some facilities targeted for closure has allegedly directed staff to reject placements.

“We believe that regional hospitals continue to seek placements of individuals in the state’s psychiatric programs,” Spence wrote. “It seems counterintuitive that during a global public health crisis, fewer persons would require psychiatric support at state facilities.”

Find other ways to close gap

Spence urged the Legislature to find other ways to close the budget gap and increase revenues.

“Multiple options have been advanced to increase income and other taxes on the state’s most affluent individuals so that everyone can share in the sacrifice to close this year’s budget gap,” Spence said. “New York state maintains the most qualified, highest caliber state workforce in the nation. Unfortunately, this budget proposal continues to undermine the state workforce by initiating plans to privatize and diminish the services that New Yorkers need.”

To read the full submitted testimony, [click here](#).



PEF weighs in on state transportation budget

By KATE MOSTACCIO

New York is facing a massive budget shortfall and a deadly pandemic, facts that PEF Regional Coordinator Andrew Puleo pointed to in written testimony urging state leaders to carefully assess capital projects, implement a tax on the uber-wealthy, and revamp the design-build system, among other key issues, during his testimony before a joint budget hearing on the 2021-2022 Executive Budget Proposal on Transportation.



PEF Regional Coordinator
Andrew Puleo

“While PEF supports the need for continued funding to improve the state’s infrastructure, we have serious concerns with the prioritization of many of these initiatives over the proposed funding cuts to state agencies, the diminution of services to the state’s most at-risk residents, the continued reduction in the state workforce, the continued lack of transparency and oversight on agencies who use taxpayer dollars to hire private service contractors and the lack of public oversight on taxpayer funded

public works projects,” Puleo said.

PEF supports investing in state and local bridges, non-MTA transit, pedestrian and bike facilities, rail and aviation improvements and expediting a transition to a greener economy – but called into question the timing of such projects.

“We are in the midst of a deadly pandemic where thousands of residents have already lost their jobs, homes, health care and too many have lost their lives,” Puleo said. “The massive increase in capital spending proposed in this budget dramatically increases the state’s out-year debt load

while proposing to close a projected \$15 billion operating budget gap by cutting and privatizing the state’s mental health services; closing at-risk youth and prison facilities; consolidating agencies and programs; and cutting the earned health insurance benefits of the very public employees characterized as heroes for the past 12 months.”

Puleo urged the panel to consider supporting a slight increase to taxes paid by multi-millionaires and billionaires.

“If enacted, a package of small, progressive state taxes on the incomes of uber-wealthy New Yorkers could generate substantial and recurring resources,” he said. “New York is at a critical juncture given the revenue shortfall and the increasing expenses needed to fight the coronavirus and distribute the vaccine efficiently and immediately. The Executive Budget proposes to balance the state’s budget deficit on the backs of the hard-working state employees who have served on the frontlines during this pandemic.

PEF endorses legislation to require evaluation of current private service contracts; require cost-benefit analysis for all future private service contracts; require agency disclosure of outside service contract needs; and require taxpayer representation on all taxpayer-funded projects.

“This year’s Executive Budget proposes to reduce the state workforce by an additional 830 staff,” Puleo said. “Despite chronic understaffing, forced redeployments, mandated overtime and concerns over infecting family members, the state workforce continued to show up and get the job done during the pandemic. The state of New York should be looking to develop its workforce capacity and to supplement its services, not outsourcing programs and cutting competitive civil service positions.”

To read the full written testimony, [click here](#).



Town hall call gives members latest news on state budget, COVID, contract, more

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

PEF members joined President Wayne Spence, Secretary-Treasurer Kay Alison Wilkie and top union staff February 4 for a virtual town hall meeting that provided updates on critical issues and a call for every member to reach out to their state Assembly and Senate representatives.

The state budget process is in full swing and members have just a few weeks in February and March to make the case for why the state must back away from proposed closings of state facilities, agency mergers and the consolidation and greater privatization of state services. Members are urged to speak up to defend their jobs and services. [Sample letters to state legislators on priority budget issues](#) are available on the PEF website for members to personalize and send.

Members participating in the call also received updates on lawsuits PEF has filed on their behalf, information about COVID-19 vaccinations, and PEF's efforts to get the state to extend telecommuting and paid leave for members exposed or testing positive for the COVID-19 virus.

Information was provided on additional COVID matters and the union announced PEF will soon offer more training.

Spence urged members not to put off applying to use their vacation accruals because the state may stop rolling unused leave forward, and the union will only be able to successfully fight for you to keep your leave if you applied to use it but were denied.

Wilkie briefed members on the union's finances, as well as the continuing major renovations at PEF headquarters in Albany



to eliminate the need for frequent and costly repairs. Spence joined her in emphasizing that they have no intention to raise members' dues, which are the lowest in the state and have not increased in two decades.

"President Spence and I are committed to not increasing dues!" Wilkie said.

You may listen to the entire call, which lasted about an hour, [here](#).



Photos from left to right: Nora Higgins – Region 12 Coordinator, Mina Cavallaro – 6H SUNY Upstate, Bobbie Stafford – Region 4 Coordinator, Claudia Ames-Smith – RN and Council Leader, Darlene Williams – Region 10 Coordinator, Melissa Fox – SUNY Downstate

PEF frontliners get vaccinated

PEF members working on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic are finally getting some protection as they are among the first to receive vaccination against the virus. Members shown here mainly work at SUNY Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse, and also PEF Health and Safety Committee

Chair Darlene Williams, who works at the Psychiatric Institute in Manhattan. The union strongly supports voluntary vaccination and invites you to [send us your photos](#).

Your outstanding service makes PEF proud!

COVID-19: New York Vaccines

This is a running total of the number of Americans who have received doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Total doses administered: 2,136,209 | Total doses received: 2,808,825

From New York's COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Dashboard as of Feb. 7, 2021



Thank you PEF heroes!

[Watch video](#)

Union shares urgent COVID-19 concerns with state legislators

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

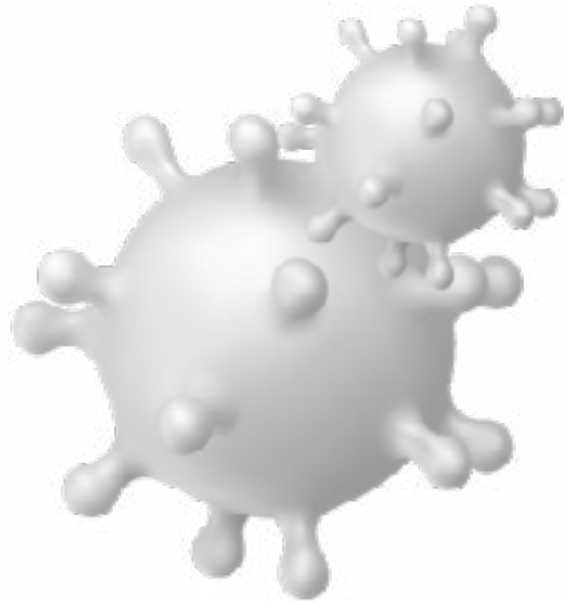
With the new surge of COVID-19 infections plunging state health care and other workers into another very dangerous situation, PEF is moving to alert state lawmakers to the urgent needs and concerns for keeping workers and their patients and clients safe.

PEF Vice President and Political Action Chair Randi DiAntonio and the union's Legislative Office have been working with the Field Services and Health and Safety Departments to arrange meetings with legislators to highlight the abject failure of state agency management to implement and enforce common sense protocols to keep PEF members, their clients and their communities safe from the spread of COVID-19.

"The most egregious of these failures is occurring at the residential facilities – operated by the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, the Office of Children and Family Services, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities and the Office of Mental Health – where the state has seen the highest infection rates and deaths from COVID," DiAntonio said.

PEF continues to fight to make sure that each agency is developing protocols to require:

- Use of masks and appropriate PPE (personal protective equipment) by clients and staff;
- Rapid testing of staff and clients who show symptoms or are otherwise exposed to the virus;
- Guidelines to expand agency use of telecommuting to limit staff who are required to physically return to worksites; and



- Stronger communication with staff and clients regarding potential exposures and contact tracing.

"The new, more highly contagious strand of COVID-19 requires state agency management to up its game," DiAntonio said. "We should not need to be haggling over PPE, requiring masking or instituting social distancing a year after the first cases of COVID-19 were found in New York."



Telecommuting agreement extended

PEF has negotiated an extension of the temporary emergency agreement with the state regarding telecommuting, which was set to expire at the end of last year. It is now extended to April 2, 2021.

The agreement between PEF and the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) extends the program date in section VIII of the [Statewide Telecommuting Pilot Program Agreement](#) until the close of business April 2, 2021.

"We are very glad that we've been able to obtain this extension," PEF President Wayne Spence said, "but it doesn't necessarily mean that every agency is choosing to participate or will properly use telecommuting as a way to keep our members safe during this second wave of the coronavirus.

"I urge each local PEF leader to make an official request, either through the labor-management or joint health and safety

process, that your agency fully utilize the now extended telecommuting option.

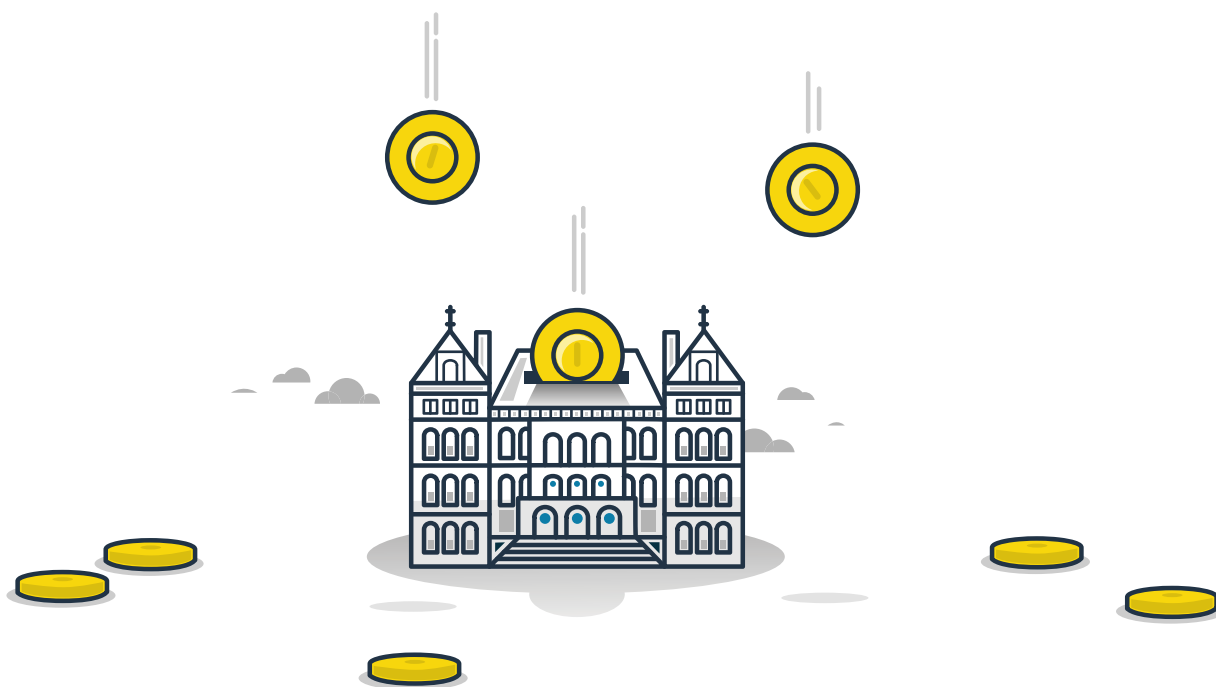
"Our members have proven throughout this pandemic that many services to New York can be accomplished via telecommuting," Spence said. "Forcing PEF members back into clustered workplaces demonstrates the disconnect between the governor's public statements and state agency management's interpretation of those statements. Failing to take full advantage of the telecommuting option can put the workforce and local communities at further and needless risk from this unrelenting, aggressive virus, and we all know that must stop."

Sherry Halbrook

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Members impacted by correctional facility closures meet with DOCCS

By KATE MOSTACCIO

PEF members impacted by the upcoming closures of two correctional facilities and an annex will meet with Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) personnel representatives to discuss their rights during the reduction in workforce process.

DOCCS identified Gowanda Correctional Facility, Watertown Correctional Facility and Clinton Annex for closure, effective March 30, 2021, citing in a memorandum to employees “the incarcerated population has continued to decline significantly” and the closures must begin immediately to achieve “the savings associated with the state’s financial plan for this agency.”

Meetings with the 97 members impacted at Gowanda, Watertown’s 43 members and the members at Clinton Annex took place in January. The agency set special meetings for staff identified as the least senior employee in a civilian title in the impacted counties. Veterans or disabled veterans should bring a copy of their DD-214 to the meetings. Staff will receive packets of information related to reduction in workforce procedures.

“There is never a good time to find out your job is disappearing, but this holiday season at the end of an exceptionally traumatic year is especially tough,” said PEF President Wayne Spence. “Our hearts go out to the PEF members now forced to make life-changing decisions. We are committed to helping them navigate the situation and continue their fulfilling careers with New York State.”

DOCCS pledged to “make every effort to assist each facility employee to transfer into an available, funded, vacant position at another correctional facility within the Department, or with another state agency,” in accordance with Civil Service and union contracts.

PEF leaders vow to hold them to their pledge.

“We will find a home for everybody,” DOCCS Labor/Management Chair and Executive Board member Steven Drake said in a call with other Division leaders and PEF staff. “We’ve been successful in the past to find places close to home. We have a lot of vacancies in the Department of



Corrections and they have been vacant because of the anticipation of these closures.” Drake said DOCCS is confident they will be able to place everyone.

The union stands behind the impacted employees and will fight for their rights.

“The state does not anticipate any layoffs, but we are concerned about job security and quality of life as workers transition to new assignments and we will fight to make sure our members see no reduction in their paychecks,” President Spence said.

At the meetings this month, Central Office staff will discuss Civil Service protocols and procedures so every member knows their rights during the closure process, including issues of seniority and bumping rights. PEF field representatives, council leaders and labor/management members will be attending the facility meetings alongside impacted members.

DOCCS Labor Management Co-Chair Sharon Lamb said each member would receive a folder from DOCCS with detailed information and actions will need to be taken quickly.

“A lot of individual answers will come out of those folders,” she said.



The timing of the closures puts the health and safety of inmates and staff at risk, President Spence stated.

“We are disappointed that Gov. Cuomo chose to close these three facilities at this time,” he said. “We understand the fiscal crisis the state is facing, but there is also an ongoing health crisis within the walls of New York’s correctional facilities. Why crowd the system during a second wave of the coronavirus? The health and safety of all impacted needs to be considered. The rushed closure of these facilities and the transfer of incarcerated individuals and staff who may have been exposed to COVID-19 defies the advice of public health advocates and puts communities at risk.”

Move dates for inmates have not been established, Drake said, but PEF did ask that all inmates be tested for COVID-19 before being moved and that current COVID-positive and quarantined inmates would move last.

Many of the specialty programs at the locations slated to close will transfer to neighboring facilities, Drake said, and talks are

underway to find homes for each program. But the disruption in services couldn’t come at a worse time.

“The skilled PEF members currently employed at these facilities provide the critical mental health, wellness, education and job training support necessary for incarcerated individuals to successfully reintegrate back into their communities,” Spence said. “PEF supports reasonable, responsible and appropriate criminal justice reform that provides resources to create real avenues for oversight, rehabilitation and reintegration back into the community. We are concerned those avenues will be blocked for some individuals as a result of this shortsighted decision.”

PEF has information on its website pertaining to reductions in workforce. Access those resources [here](#).



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PEF nurses testify before SUNY Board of Trustees on salary disparity, COVID pay

By KATE MOSTACCIO

As the COVID-19 pandemic rips through the country, PEF nurses remain on the frontlines in hospitals, nursing homes, and congregate facilities across New York State.

Nurses at SUNY Stony Brook, SUNY Upstate and SUNY Downstate, all major medical centers in their respective communities, care for countless COVID patients every day – and they are doing it for sometimes substantially less pay than neighboring professionals.

“I have worked at Stony Brook for 32 years,” said PEF Region 12 Coordinator Nora Higgins, a neonatal intensive care nurse and chair of the SUNY labor/management committee. “Nursing in general has not had a salary grade increase in decades, not since I arrived in 1988.”

Some campaigns for improvements were successful over the years, such as geographic pay enhancements meant to help recruit and retain nurses, but those gains applied unfairly had the opposite impact. In trying to keep new nurses from leaving for higher-paying jobs, SUNY increased new employee pay more than the pay of long-time employees, wreaking havoc on morale.



PEF Region 12 Coordinator
Nora Higgins

“The plan backfired,” Higgins said. “Geographics and disparaged disbursement created animosity and people left. A person there for 10 years got \$1,000 and people just off orientation got \$6,000.” And, while the trustees approved the geographic pay with the intention that “no seasoned nurse is making less than a new nurse,” Higgins said, “when they did this it absolutely did put newer employees over people there longer.”

Fellow Stony Brook nurse Amy Lee Palcholk, an assistant professor at Suffolk County Community College who has been advocating for appropriate levels of personal protective equipment (PPE) since the start of the pandemic, echoed Higgins’ sentiments on geographic pay.

“What was clear was that nurses with less experience, education and years of service received more of an increase



than those with many years of experience, education and service,” she told the trustees. “What became evident over the weeks to come was that the Executive Board of Stony Brook Hospital advocated for the inequitable disbursement thinking it would keep nurses with less experience from leaving Stony Brook Medicine. It actually didn’t.”

Those new nurses still moved on to higher-paying jobs at private hospitals in their areas of expertise.

“Nurses can go to Stony Brook for one to two years and then go to the competition and their salary is \$10,000 to \$40,000 more, based on their area of expertise,” Palcholk said. A state worker at Stony Brook for 30 years can easily make \$250,000 less than nurses at neighboring facilities over the course of their career.

The pandemic hit SUNY hospitals hard, Higgins and Palcholk said. But, unlike nearby private hospitals, SUNY staff did not receive any bonuses or hazard pay for their work above and beyond the norm during the crisis.

“All of our neighboring institutions offered bonuses to their staff,” Palcholk said, “anywhere from \$2,500 to \$5,000, in time and in money. Stony Brook nurses, ancillary staff and housekeeping have received nothing. I understand the state is under distress and we have some monetary issues, but at no time should the nurses, respiratory staff, doctors, housekeeping, and clerks have to continue to suffer with less pay. Equal work should mean equal pay. It’s really sad that we are not paid like our colleagues.”



Higgins also advocated for pay increases for EMS staff at Stony Brook.

“Stony Brook has the only state-run EMT department,” she said. The highly-skilled and trained members were overlooked for geographic pay and salary grade increases, leaving them essentially “the working poor” on Long Island, Higgins said.

Pay disparity isn’t the only compensation issue facing SUNY workers. Vacation time and holidays also fall short of the competition.

A memorandum of understanding between employees and SUNY provides for two weeks of paid annual time and three major holidays off at Stony Brook – “but management has chosen to ignore that and cheat members out of three holidays, replacing them with a ‘pass day,’” Higgins said. “The big picture is that employees only have two weeks of paid time off for annual vacation and nothing else.”

By comparison, state employees in office settings get 13 holidays off, she noted.

“This was put in place for recruitment and retention,” she said. “Now they are pulling it away. They’re saying you don’t need a holiday. Very few people are getting off with holiday time.”

Higgins asked the Board of Trustees to take action and be part of the solution for health care workers.

“As each day passes, the price we pay for our patients’ lives becomes more insurmountable,” she said. “We desperately need financial support and retention at a higher capacity for all our health care workers.”



**Safe staffing could have saved
so many more lives...
access to proper PPE still can.**

Get financial boost for college; apply for union scholarships

By KATE MOSTACCIO

The COVID-19 crisis threatens to put higher education dreams in jeopardy for many aspiring college students, with the unemployment rate more than doubled and state budgets threatening the future of public universities.

"After years of declines in state funding driving greater student debt, the recent leveling out of student debt shows the value of investments in higher education," notes Debbie Cochrane, executive vice president of The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS). "However, neither state investment nor student debt levels have recovered from the Great Recession, and the COVID-19 pandemic risks putting any progress in jeopardy. Students and families are looking to federal and state policymakers to do the hard work needed to prevent student debts from rising quickly again."

More than six in ten college seniors who graduated from public and private nonprofit colleges in 2019 had student loan debt and owed an average of \$28,950, according to [TICAS](#).

To ease some of the financial burden for PEF families, the union, along with some of its individual divisions and regions, offers [scholarships](#) to members, retirees, and their families.

PEF scholarships

The Joseph Scacalossi scholarship program is merit-based and open only to dependents of PEF members and PEF retirees. Applicants must be high school seniors or college freshmen.

Through the program, named after Scacalossi, a leader in organizing PEF and Division 245 at the state Labor



Department in New York City, 10 students are awarded \$1,000 annually for up to four years.

The preliminary application is due March 19, 2021. It can be accessed online [here](#). Upon verification, a final application will be mailed to students, which is due back April 30, 2021.

Scholarships are sometimes offered by individual PEF regions and divisions. Contact your regional office or your council leader for information about divisional and/or regional scholarships and deadlines for applying.

[Click here for PEF regional office contact information.](#)





PEF members help Buffalo Bills host a playoff game

By KATE MOSTACCIO

PEF members with the state Department of Health (DOH) were instrumental in making it possible for thousands of fans to attend the Buffalo Bills playoff game January 9, the first time the Bills have made the playoffs in more than two decades.

"We were involved as planners and coordinators of the Bills' game day activities," said PEF member John Ingram, a public health services representative with DOH. "The Bills and New York State Department of Health said you couldn't get in if you didn't have a negative COVID test. We helped with pre-game COVID testing, monitored temperature checks as fans walked in, and did testing of people on game day. After the game started, we monitored the crowd for social distancing and mask wearing."

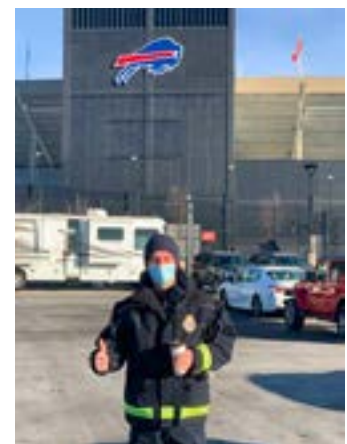


PEF members, wearing yellow reflective vests, worked January 9 at the Buffalo Bills playoff game, ensuring social distancing and mask wearing. Members also assisted with game-day rapid COVID testing, temperature checks and planning for the event.

New York State approved a capacity of 6,772 fans, about 9 percent of the stadium's capacity, to attend the game. The team set up a 30-lane, drive-thru facility in one of the parking lots outside the stadium for two days of pre-game testing. BioReference Laboratories in New Jersey processed samples and on Jan. 8, one day before the game, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced during his COVID briefing that 1.9 percent – or 137 fans — tested positive and were unable to attend.

Ingram said PEF members working the game were well-received by fans.

"A lot of people thanked us for the service that we were offering and for looking out for the public's best interest and welfare," he said. "We had little to no problems. The biggest problem was people refusing to put on their masks. They may have grumbled, but in the end, they did put them on. We expected resistance and belligerence, but the vast majority were not."



Fire Protection Specialists worked with professionals from NYSDOH and NYSP to ensure fans' safe return to Bills Stadium.

Of the 62 DOH employees working that day, approximately 80 percent of them were PEF members, Ingram said.

"Even at the administrative level," he said. "We're professionals and we tried to handle it professionally and deal with issues as they arrived. We tried to account for as many logistical concerns as possible. They put things together very quickly and we tried to be the best we can for the public we serve."

For many of them, this was a new experience.

"I've done testing site surveillance and team leads," Ingram said. "A lot of this was familiar to me. But, a majority of members there haven't been involved in something like this, so it was something new."

Death of top labor leader, early PEF supporter John Sweeney mourned

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

It took years of organizing and strategizing for New York leaders of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) to help New York state employees hold the fateful election in 1978 that made PEF the bargaining agent for the state's Professional, Scientific and Technical (PS&T) unit. Until then PEF was really only an idea promoted by John Sweeney and George Hardy of SEIU, Al Shankar of AFT, and activists such as John Kramer who became the first president of PEF.

The last survivor of those men, Sweeney, died February 1, in Bethesda, Md. at the age of 86. Hardy died in 1990, Shankar in 1997 and Kramer in 2005.

Sweeney was a native of the Bronx who grew up with his Irish-Catholic immigrant parents. As a child, Sweeney attended union meetings with his father and it made an impression on him that set the course for his own life. He was elected president of SEIU in 1980 and then president of the national AFL-CIO in 1995. He led the organization until retiring in 2009.

Sweeney is hailed today for his unwavering determination to bring women and minorities into organized labor as equal members and in top leadership positions, for his fights to support janitors and workers in the lowest paid positions, and for building powerful coalitions with civil rights, academics and religious groups. That leadership was recognized when President Barack Obama presented Sweeney the Presidential Medal of Freedom Award in 2010.

PEF President Wayne Spence expressed the union's sorrow and condolences to the Sweeney family.

"John Sweeney continues to inspire us. And as we lose yet another of the dynamic, visionary leaders who organized and mentored our union through its early years, we are reminded of the need for each of us to step forward and meet the many challenges that confront us today," Spence said. They showed us just what organized labor can accomplish when we are skillful and unflinching in our determination."

Sweeney received a bachelor's degree in economics in 1956 from Iona College, earning his way through school with jobs as a grave digger and a building porter. After college, he worked for IBM as a researcher, but left to work for two-thirds less pay as a researcher for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. From there, he went to SEIU and was elected president of the 45,000-member Local 32B in New York City in 1976, at the same time Hardy was directing SEIU to organize PEF.



John J. Sweeney receives prestigious Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama, February 16, 2011. Photo courtesy of the NY Times

Sweeney and Shankar, who led the teachers union in New York City and later became AFT president, pressed their unions to help organize PEF, and then fight off a year of legal challenges from the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) which had previously represented PS&T unit employees.

The shock that CSEA, an independent union that operated more like an association, felt when it lost the PS&T unit to upstart PEF caused it to immediately affiliate with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which is part of the AFL-CIO. CSEA then claimed that PEF and its two parent unions had violated the AFL-CIO's rule that its member unions could not raid each other, but the AFL-CIO saw through that complaint, noting that CSEA should have affiliated with AFSCME before the vote. Nevertheless, the remaining members of CSEA benefitted from affiliation with AFSCME, which brought them into the AFL-CIO.

Shankar and Sweeney remained strong supporters of PEF throughout their lives and PEF continues to benefit from its affiliations with SEIU and AFT. The two unions have often diverged on strategies regarding national labor issues, but their bonds to PEF have remained strong.

Celebrating Black History Month with virtual program on innovators

By KATE MOSTACCIO

Did you know 46-year-old inventor and newspaperman Garrett Morgan patented the three-position traffic signal in November of 1923? Morgan's design offered more than just the traditional "stop" and "go" signals, regulating vehicles more safely than earlier signals.

Morgan is just one of the Black innovators that PEF members in New York State Department of Transportation's (DOT) Region 11 will feature during a virtual Black History Month celebration. The stories of Jan Ernst Matzeliger, the inventor of the Shoe Lasting Machine; Philip Emeagwali, who created the world's fastest computer by emulating the honeycomb construction of bees; and Sarah Boone, the inventor of the ironing board, will also be featured.

"Region 11 has an annual Black History Month celebration," said Coffy Andrews-Guo, an assistant engineer at DOT and a PEF member for 22 years. "This year, the theme is Black innovators and how they contribute to America and worldwide in science, engineering, technology and math (STEM). We want to emphasize their contributions from the beginning in those areas."

The virtual program will consist of a series of PowerPoint presentations, released each week during February. During the final week, there will be a live presentation featuring Region 11's DOT director, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) regional director and former longtime PEF member Adam Levine, who was promoted to regional traffic engineer, an M/C position, after 26 years with PEF.

This is Andrews-Guo's second year working on the Black History Month celebration and Levine's first. With the social justice movement sweeping across the country, they were inspired to be a part of the conversation.

"I want to bring it onto a broader platform," Andrews-Guo said. "Collaborating with DEC, we have two designers who created designs that were breathtaking. I think showcasing our diversity in the region, our artwork and our commitment to building a platform for Black History Month speaks for itself."

For the past two months, a committee consisting of PEF members Andrews-Guo, Babatunde Tugbobo, Samantha Dreher, Geoffrey L. Rick, Shavar Mowatt, and Manfred Magloire; CSEA members Renee Liverpool, Dawn Francis, and Rayness Smith; and Levine from M/C staff, have worked to select and research Black innovators and put together the presentations on each.

BLACK HISTORY
MONTH 2021



VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS
COMMUNITY AND ENGAGEMENT



Created by PEF member Samantha Dreher to promote Black History Month.

The live event will feature messages from the DOT and DEC regional directors and highlight several innovators.

"We're also going to have a moment of silence for a couple of very involved past committee members, one of whom was a PEF member," Levine said. The live event will also feature the poem Lift Every Voice and Sing.

The significance of the month is clear to both Levine and Andrews-Guo.

"I think Black History Month celebrates coming together," Levine said. "That's something I'm really proud of with the committee – we are all coming together from different backgrounds, unions and agencies. We're erasing all those lines and coming together to celebrate this really important event."

For Andrews-Guo, it is about more than what you see on the outside.

"I'm from the Caribbean and for me Black History Month is more than celebrating African Americans," she said. "It's celebrating unity between different cultures. So we see more than just a physical appearance, you see the person themselves."

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the committee hopes this year will continue to build on the successes of the past. Presenting a virtual program is new territory for the committee.

"We've done it physically in-house in the region in the past," Andrews-Guo said. "This year it will be on MS Teams and through a YouTube channel."

The remaining schedule for February is:

- Feb 8 – Black Innovators in Engineering and Technology Virtual Video Presentation
- Feb 15 – Black Innovators in Science Virtual Video Presentation
- Feb 24 – Black Innovators – Transportation & Communicators, MS Teams Live Presentation

You can access the program content on YouTube [here](#).



Members support agriculture and agritourism through Taste NY program

By KATE MOSTACCIO

PEF members Tim Pezzolesi, Jessica Henesy and Teia DeCarlo work every day to highlight New York State agriculture, from eating and drinking local to promoting New York State products at Welcome Centers, Thruway rest stops and other retail locations via the Taste NY program.

"Taste NY is the official eat local, drink local program for New York State," said Pezzolesi, the marketing and promotion team leader for the program since 2017 and a PEF member since 2006. "There is a lot of interest and a lot of value in local products."

Pezzolesi said the primary goal of the program, created in 2013 by Governor Andrew Cuomo and administered by the Department of Agriculture and Markets, is to promote New York's farms and food and beverage industries and to drive agritourism throughout the state.

"Taste NY focuses on creating opportunities for producers to showcase their goods at retail locations and events throughout the state," he said. "It allows farmers to reach more customers and to increase their visibility. Many times, it has helped them to expand the number of people they employ or the processing capacity of their business."

Henesy, who joined Ag and Markets in the fall of 2019 and PEF in early 2020, is the Taste NY market operations manager. She says that the state's unique partnerships with not-for-profit organizations, such as Cornell Cooperative Extension, help to connect New York farms and food and beverage producers with resources and get a leg up in the market.

"These partnerships provide access to labeling, licensing, different ways for producers to work with product to get to a larger market," Henesy said. "We have a lot of wonderful partners on a retail level that help producers and help us teach the general public about what it means to purchase from Taste NY."



Taste NY at the North Country Welcome Center

For small businesses throughout New York, the program offers them vital business development opportunities.

"New York ranks very highly in agriculture rankings for commodities," Pezzolesi said. "There are currently about 33,000 family farms that produce food and beverage on over 7 million acres of the state. That has a lot of value, not only to the agricultural industry and the economy, but also because our farmers manage so much land, which has a huge positive impact on sustainability, the environment and local communities."

Taste NY gets New York-made products in front of consumers in a variety of ways. Taste NY products can be found at more than 70 locations, including standalone markets, Thruway travel plazas, Welcome Centers, state parks, airports, train stations, and concessions at sports and entertainment venues.

Each location offers a variety of options.



“Taste NY Markets have the widest diversity of product,” Pezzolesi said. “From grab-and-go snacks, to frozen meats, eggs and milk, seasonal produce and more, these standalone stores exclusively offer local New York products. There are also smaller gift stores, kiosks, and vending machines at different locations. The product offerings vary depending on the location, the amount of traffic, and consumer demand.”



Taste NY at the Finger Lakes Welcome Center

Each Welcome Center, for example, emphasizes and highlights products from its own region, Pezzolesi said. There are 11 Welcome Centers located in New York’s 10 regions.

“They were designed to focus on each region’s specialties,” he said. “The types of products vary from region to region. It’s really a fun and interesting way for people to experience and explore different products unique to New York’s diverse regions.”

In 2020, Taste NY launched an online storefront, [Shop Taste NY](#), said DeCarlo, a PEF member for a year and a half, and the brand manager for Taste NY.

“Shop Taste NY is our online platform that the Hudson Valley | Catskills Welcome Center and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County operate,” she said. “It’s another way for people to access fresh, local New York products. The site can be navigated by region, and we help them rotate products regularly to make sure the site has a good representation of all the commodity groups in New York. The website features a wide variety of products like jams and jellies, candies, maple products and gift products.”

In addition to events, retail locations and the online store, Taste NY targets travelers in other ways.

“As people travel across New York, they will see highway signs featuring local businesses along with the Taste NY logo,” Henesy said. “That’s a great way for travelers to make the connection that a business is a New York State producer, so they can choose to shop local and support the New York State economy.”

Their efforts have certainly paid off – Taste NY has grown each year. In 2019, total sales were \$21.6 million, and the program benefited 1,800 food and beverage companies across the state.

Taste NY has adapted and innovated during the COVID-19 crisis, hosting virtual events, piloting curbside pickup options at different locations, and working with local businesses to offer assistance during shutdowns and restrictions.

“The Adirondack Welcome Center hosted a virtual B2B (Business to Business) event,” DeCarlo said. “In previous years, they did them in person and they were very successful in helping producers build relationships and facilitate relationships with new buyers. The 2020 virtual event was two hours long and each participant had two minutes to talk about their offerings and story.”

Fifty-nine vendors participated in the event and more than 40 of them formulated new relationships or got their products into new markets, Henesy said.

Henesy said some market locations connected with local businesses that had to shut down in 2020 and began picking up their products and offering them in the market. She said Oscar’s Smokehouse, having had success with Taste NY vending machines at the Adirondacks Welcome Center, was inspired to put a vending machine outside its facility to supplement sales during the pandemic.

“We’ve worked with a lot of businesses and helped them make decisions,” Henesy said. “There has been a lot of work that has been ongoing between market operators and vendors to help them make adjustments for their business during the pandemic.”

Henesy said some markets developed call-ahead and curbside pickup options.

“We continue to support local small businesses during this crisis period,” she said. “We’re all proud of and passionate about this program and always happy to talk to anyone with questions or who wants to get involved.”

“It’s a really exciting program and it’s exciting when we hear success stories,” Pezzolesi said. “It’s very gratifying to be able to support New Yorkers in that way. We look forward to finding new ways to build the program and connect farmers throughout New York to the state’s consumers.”

Learn more about Taste NY [online](#).



DEC dump truck in line waiting to get loaded.

Member assists with record snowstorm cleanup

By KATE MOSTACCIO

It was all hands on deck to deal with the record-breaking snowfall in Binghamton and Schenectady December 16-17, 2020, and PEF members at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) shifted from their typical job duties to that of clean up to help overwhelmed crews.

Near the National Weather Service (NWS) office in Binghamton, a staggering 40 inches of snow fell and the NWS observed an unprecedented 20.5 inches in six hours. The storm broke the record for the heaviest two-day snowstorm — 35.3 inches — that fell in mid-March 2017, according to the Washington Post.

PEF member Doug McCabe, a DEC conservation operations supervisor, usually oversees DEC operations in Clinton, Essex, Franklin and parts of Hamilton counties. During weather emergencies, he meets with the agency's emergency response coordinator and queries personnel to see who is available to assist.

"DEC Operations staff will check over the equipment, such as dump trucks, trailers and other heavy equipment to insure everything is ready for deployment," McCabe said. "Whenever there is an emergency, such as snow or wind, DOT or other agencies will send a request for aid. I've done this a few times with the wind storms in Hamilton County and a large snow storm five to six years ago in Albany."

The Friday and Saturday of this storm, McCabe found volunteers from his staff to deploy to hard-hit Schenectady. On Sunday, McCabe himself answered the call.

"I hopped in the tandem-axle dump truck and drove to Schenectady from Saranac Lake and hauled snow for 10-12 hours and then drove back," McCabe said. "In Saranac Lake, we get snow like that every year, but it was quite a bit for that location with small streets, the amount of snow and no place to put it. It was quite devastating for those guys down there."



DOT truck being loaded by a loader.

McCabe said the experience is always rewarding.

"It's a great experience working with everyone," he said. "Everybody is just working together, getting the job done and making sure we open up the city so people can move around."

"I think it's a good thing and anytime we can help anybody else is always good," McCabe said. "If we need help, it usually comes back to us."

Hitting the road again

PEF members across [state agencies were also involved in the storm](#) that dumped 25 inches of snow on some regions of the Hudson Valley; 12-18 inches in New York City and on Long Island; and up to 12 inches in areas further upstate.

McCabe and his DEC colleagues may have more work ahead of them. On Feb. 2, groundhog Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow, calling for six more weeks of winter.





Letters to the Editor

Avoid buying products made in China

To the Editor:

The PEF Membership Benefits Program recently purchased and distributed part-cotton cloth face masks manufactured in China. Sadly, in its beneficial economic effect, this purchase helps China to maintain its persecution of Uyghur and other ethnic groups who live there. Notably, this persecution includes forced labor in the production of cotton and apparel items.

PEF's purchase similarly helps China speed its overthrow of neighboring regimes in Taiwan and HongKong. People of these states are trying to preserve their independence and human rights in the face of chauvinistic Chinese expansionism. It's not a secret that China is tailoring its military to be better able to fight United States forces, if we come to the aid of a Taiwanese people hoping to remain free.

While I can believe that PEF's misguided mask purchase was likely done innocently, and with good intentions for members' health, I think it's important in retrospect that PEF makes a clear statement to dispel any suggestion that it condones buying from China, other than in cases of significant duress.

CRAIG BOCK

Waterford

Editor's note: *The PEF Membership Benefits Program (MBP) purchased 60,000 masks in the summer of 2020 for delivery to active members at the end of the year. At the time, MBP could not source enough three-ply masks in the United States. Only one- or two-ply masks were available due to high demand for the safer three-ply masks. MBP always tries to buy items made in the USA and only brings USA-made products to membership meetings. This was a limited exception during the pandemic, driven by health and safety concerns.*

Medicare should be his co-pay

To the Editor:

I am a (retiree with) Medicare first, Empire Plan second. I keep track of co-pays and I pay more in co-pays than my Empire Plan insurance pays in benefits.

I believe there should not be any co-pays for retirees, since Medicare pays first and that payment should be considered the co-pay.

BOB MELE

Troy



Watch out for NYSHIP–Medicare pitfalls

Retirees, 2020 was a very challenging year, and despite the challenges we need to stay informed, engaged and active in 2021.

September through January is the time of year when you need to pay attention to your mail. That’s when the state Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP) mails you important information on your health insurance coverage. These booklets are:

- Evidence of Coverage (Jan 1, 2021 – Dec 31, 2021); and
- 2021 Annual Notice of change for 2021.

It’s important that we read these documents and are familiar with our coverage and our choices. For example, in Health Insurance Choices 2021 it states on page 3 under Non-NYSHIP Plans: “Please keep in mind that Medicare allows enrollment in only one Medicare product at a time. ... therefore, enrolling in a Medicare Advantage Plan, a Medicare Part D plan or another Medicare product (including those in which you or your covered dependents may be enrolled through another employer) in addition to your coverage will result in cancellation of your NYSHIP coverage.”

I suggest you read this whole section thoroughly! It is important that we know our benefits in order to make informed choices. It is also important to know when and if we should get the COVID-19 Vaccine. Therefore, I have included the following information that went out from our PEF Retiree Office in an email blast.

Sent in behalf of James Carr, SW PEF Retirees President

PEF Retirees:

Many members have been calling asking about the plan for rollout of the COVID vaccines. I received some information from a former EAP (Employees Assistance Program) coordinator who is now a PEF retiree and also got some helpful information from our fellow retiree group RPEA that I would like to share with you.

As always, be safe. Wear a mask, social distance and, when possible, get your vaccine. Hopefully 2021 will be a better year.

In Unity,

Jim Carr
PEF Statewide Retiree President

COVID Vaccination Update

As you know, the vaccination process has begun, although at a much slower pace than was anticipated. As noted below, those in Phase 1a are currently eligible to be vaccinated. It is anticipated that we may enter Phase 1b soon, although an exact date has yet to be announced.

Eligible New Yorkers in Phase 1a are:

- High-risk hospital workers (emergency room workers, ICU staff and Pulmonary Department staff);
- Residents and staff at nursing homes and other congregate-care facilities;
- Federally Qualified Health Center employees;
- Individuals administering COVID-19 vaccines, including local health department staff;
- EMS workers;
- Coroners, medical examiners and certain funeral workers;
- Staff and residents at OPWDD, OMH and OASAS facilities; and
- Urgent Care providers.

Beginning January 4, 2021:

- All Outpatient/Ambulatory front-line, high-risk health care workers of any age who provide direct in-person patient care;
- All staff who are in direct contact with patients (i.e., intake staff);
- All front-line, high-risk public health workers who have direct contact with patients, including those conducting COVID-19 tests, handling COVID-19 specimens and COVID-19 vaccinations.’
- This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Doctors who work in private medical practices and their staff;
 - Doctors who work in hospital-affiliated medical practices and their staff;
 - Doctors who work in public health clinics and their staff
 - Registered nurses;
 - Specialty medical practices of all types;
 - Dentists and orthodontists and their staff;
 - Psychiatrists and psychologists and their staff;
 - Physical Therapists and their staff;



- Optometrists and their staff;
- Pharmacists and pharmacy aides;
- Home care workers;
- Hospice workers; and
- Staff of nursing homes/skilled nursing facilities who did not receive COVID vaccination through the Pharmacy Partnership for Long-Term Care Program.

Phase 1b

Following vaccinations for the health care sector, New York will move to Phase 1b of the distribution, which will include:

- Teachers and education workers;
- First responders;
- Public safety workers;
- Public transit workers; and
- People 75 and older.

Phase 1c

- People ages 65-74;
- People with certain underlying health conditions (to be determined by NYS); and
- All other essential workers (to be determined by NYS).

To help you determine when it's your turn to receive the vaccine, New York State recently launched a new "Am I Eligible" app, which can be accessed here: <https://am-i-eligible.covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/>.

If you do not meet the criteria, you will receive a "currently not eligible" notification.

If you do meet the criteria, the app will designate you as "eligible", and give you a list of providers in your area. It is up to you to schedule an appointment. It is also up to you to revisit the app as needed to check your eligibility. The Department of Health will NOT be contacting you based upon information entered previously.

Also, be sure that your physician has your up-to-date contact information, including e-mail, in the event they try to reach out regarding your ability to obtain the vaccine.

Editor's note: *The criteria for eligibility to be vaccinated and the availability of vaccine are fluid and changing now on a frequent basis. If you live in New York state, check with the state Health Department website at <https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov> for information. However even that source may direct you to designated vaccination sites that are not yet prepared to accept appointments for vaccinations or that may not have vaccine to administer.*



Ailing members need your leave donations

The following PEF members have reported a need for leave donations due to the need for medical treatment or recuperation from illness or injury.

Donations are made from annual leave and donors must retain at least 10 days of annual leave after donating. To donate leave, obtain a leave-donation form from your personnel or human resources office and submit it to that office. You may donate leave to employees at both the agency where you work and to those working at other state agencies.

To help facilitate donations, we list an HR contact number for each person needing donations on the list below.

- **Heather Crunden** is a nurse practitioner at SUNY Binghamton in Binghamton. Call 518-457-4272;
- **Barbara Fiore** is a teacher 4 at Greene Correctional Facility in Coxsackie. Call 518-731-2741;
- **Nora Fulton** is a teaching and research center nurse 2 at SUNY Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse. Call 315-464-4943;
- **Tracy Jensen** is a business services center analyst trainee 1 at the state Office of General Services in Albany. Call 518-457-4272;
- **Laura Lama** is a senior photographer at the state School for the Blind in Batavia. Call 585 343-5384;
- **Angela Midgley** is an associate in special education at the state Education Department in Albany. Call 518-474-5215;
- **Rebecca Bezon Sando** is a nurse 2 at Orleans Correctional Facility in Albion. Call 585-589-6820;

The rules for making and receiving leave donations (such as leave recipients may not have had any disciplinary actions or unsatisfactory performance evaluations within their last three years of state employment) are set forth on pages 181 and 182 of the 2016-19 PS&T Contract. If you, or a PEF member you know, need leave donations because of a medical issue, you may contact The Communicator to request publication of that need. Send requests to thecomunicator@pef.org, or call 800-342-4306, ext. 271. Be sure to provide your contact information.





Sign up **TODAY** for the eCommunicator

Keeping PEF members current on PEF news, emailed to your mobile device or home computer monthly.

www.pef.org/ecommunicator-signup/

January 14, 2021

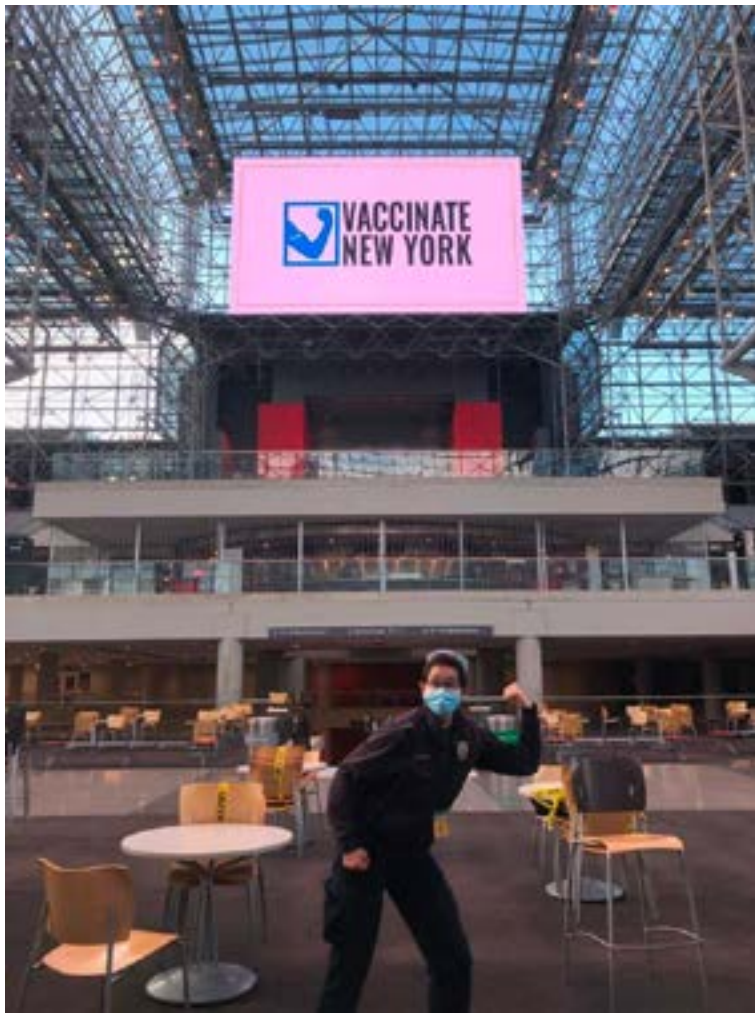
PEF Region 1 Coordinator Michele Grier Silsby spent the afternoon at Gowanda Correctional Facility talking to members about the closure and listening to concerns. She was joined by PEF Director of Organizing Dan Carpenter and PEF Divisions Assistant Director Kristie Furman from PEF HQ.



January 18, 2021

NYS Sen. Samra Brouk stopped by Rochester Psychiatric Center on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to pass out cupcakes as a small thank you to the staff. PEF members left to right: Leisa Abraham, Nicole Tarson, Joshua Redman, Vice President Randi Haskell DiAntonio, Sen. Brouk, Lisa Durkin





January 22, 2021

Fire Protection Specialists staffing the Jacob K Javits Convention Center fire safety detail are grateful for the opportunity to receive their Covid-19 Vaccine to allow them to better serve New York's population. Pictured FPS Kayley Morgan

January 5, 2021

PEF leaders and staff meeting with members from Auburn CF regarding their concerns about the increase in cases of COVID at this Correctional Facility. The state should be looking to reduce staff density on location to help slow the spread within their communities.



