



## Health Professionals and Allied Employees

Debbie White, RN, BSN – HPAE President  
Barbara Rosen, RN, BSN – HPAE First Vice-President  
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Thursday, December 09, 2021

Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer, MSW  
Department of Children and Families  
50 East State Street, 2nd floor  
PO Box 729  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0729  
[DCF.COMMISSIONER@DCF.NJ.GOV](mailto:dcf.commissioner@DCF.NJ.GOV)

Dear Commissioner Norbut Beyer,

We write to you on behalf of the 13,000 nurses and health professionals of the Health Professionals and Allied Employees, AFT/AFL-CIO, including our members in the Rutgers Child Health Program at the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center (FXB-CHP). As you know, employees of the FXB-CHP nursing program support the child welfare goals of the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF)/Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P).

We have been informed by Rutgers that DCF requires us to return to the office (RTO) on Monday, December 13, 2021. This timing seems ill-advised, given the spread of Omicron and the recent uptick in cases (all of New Jersey's 21 counties are listed as having "high" rates of coronavirus transmission, according to the [CDC](#)), and a seven-day average for confirmed positive tests that has [tripled since last month](#) (the seven-day average is up 61% from a week ago and 205% from a month ago).

Furthermore, DCP&P staff returning to the office have been offered a staggered and flexible schedule and appropriate technology to continue to work a hybrid model schedule. But as contracted employees we return to the office as required by the Department, but we have no flexible work schedule and no ability to work a hybrid schedule. (Unlike DCP&P staff, we have only desktop computers, and we are in need of upgraded equipment to support our work.) Furthermore, we have been informed that after the RTO, if we are sick we are not permitted to work from home and we must use our own leave time (a policy which may unintentionally encourage people to come to work sick). Lastly, it is unclear if there is any policy or protocol for closing offices for COVID outbreaks. Given the surge in cases, and the emails reporting positive cases in offices, there should be a plan in place to close offices when there are outbreaks.

Our priority as a union is to keep our staff members and the children that we care for safe. While we understand that there are some limitations to working from home, the safety of staff, children, and families must be a priority when there are still unknowns associated with the latest COVID variant and the rise in cases.

Please find attached to this letter a petition signed by a majority of our HPAE members working in the Rutgers FXB-CHP program. We believe that CHP should operate on a hybrid schedule, that staff must have proper equipment to work from home, and a policy must be implemented to close individual offices for COVID outbreaks.

We respectfully request a virtual meeting with you to discuss the planned RTO, and its effect on our members who are contracted employees of DCF.

Sincerely,

*Debbie White*

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President

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# We believe the Department of Children and Families and Rutgers University must keep Child Health Unit staff and children safe!

**# 1 CHU should operate on a hybrid schedule**

**# 2 Staff must have proper equipment to work from home**

**# 3 A policy of closing individual offices for COVID outbreaks must be implemented**

## Signed in Solidarity

Amy Orlandini	Dolcie Sawyer	Loreen Starks	Raquel Yorey
Amy Zimmitti	Doris Deangelis	Lorraine A. Slye	Rashidat Aladesanmi
Ana Delgado	Elizabeth Freiberger	Lynda Pasciak	Regina M. Kerley
Angela M. Smith	Elizabeth Manel	Magdaleb Hoheb	Regina Witkowski
Anna Ryan	Elsie Turlas	Magemna Musni	Rochelle Rom
Anne Coles-DiPace	Evelyn Monroe	Mallisa D. Lopez-Matos	Ronette Collins
April M. Gonzalez	Frances Orth	Maria Nieves	Samantha Yuro-Altieri
Ayisha Shoultz	Gerhild Santiago	Mary Ellen Fisher	Saphima Williams
Bharti Shah	Grace Napolitano	Mary Gruenert	Shahronda Moore
Caleb Adekanye	Helen Maslanich	Melissa Barrett	Sharon Y Johnson
Carla Smith	Jacob Koshy	Michelle Defino	Shavonne Best
Carmella Chillemi	Jeannette Hayes	Michelle Leary	Shelley Franz
Catharine Gionta	Jennifer G. Jenkins	Michelle Starks	Shenita Elder
Catherine Davis	Jo Pavia	Minelba Mercado-Gonzalez	Sophia Blake
Cecelia Bowles	Joanne Ackerman	Monica O'Neill	Susan Gant
Chauna Johnson	Joanne Barbato	Nancy Griner	Susan Manetta
Chhaya Patel	Joyce Willson	Nancy Shlossman	Sylvie Oyinkolade
Christine Hermanns	Karen Gasior	Naydia St Felix	Tashana Morman
Christine Poliviou	Karen Papanier	Nerie Giambro	Teresa Burckhardt
Christine Shatilla	Karen Williford	Nicole Jarrett	Tesha Sims
Cj Booker	Karril Best	Nicole Price	Theresa Abdel
Clarisse De La Cruz	Kathleen Stroz	Nikia Cooper	Theresa Miller
Corazon Labung	Kathleen Toy	Nkem Okonkwo	Theresa L. Rodriguez
Dana Lawrence	Kim Crenshaw	Olivia Ramirez	Toyin Omidire
Daphne Meikle	Kimberly Greenleaf	Patricia Haas	Tracey Littlejohn
Dawn Badie	Kimberly Thompson	Patricia Maroulakos	Tracie Kralle
Dawn Brown	Kristen Wilson	Paula Cutkelvin	Vanessa McDale
Dawn Peterson	Laura Keller	Paula Meikle	Vilma Torres
Debra Kyne	Lauren Thomas	Peggy Maksin	Wendy Kent
Denise Jackson	Laurene Kiza	Perpetua Ekweghariri	Xiomara Rojas-Langston
Denise Wojcik	Lisa Smith	Portia Nicdao-Belleza	Yaa Brobbey
Desiree Diaz	Lisa Swain	Rachel Brown	
Diane Crumpler	Lolita Darden	Rachelle Trenard	