
Subject: PFT Coronavirus Update 3-25-20: Pay & Pension Bill Passes, Substitutes, Rumor Control

CORONAVIRUS



Updates

Dear Dan:

PA School Pandemic Legislation Passes in House 198-0 and Senate 50-0

Legislation Waiting for Governor's Signature May Not Help Substitute Teachers; Accommodates On-Line Learning

The PA House and Senate approved an amended SB 751 (the new teacher evaluation bill) that would provide continued pay to all school employees who “would otherwise have been entitled to receive from the school entity had the pandemic of 2020 not occurred.” While this language provides the PFT with an argument to pay substitute teachers, the phrase “entitled to receive” is problematic for day-to-day substitute teachers.

The PFT’s argument is now stronger for substitutes who are in for a teacher on a leave of absence, where the substitute teacher is shy of the 40 days needed to convert to salaried status. And, the argument is stronger when a Board tab secured a “building” substitute teacher who has been in a school regularly or every day.

The PFT’s effort to convince the District to pay all substitute teachers is not over. Action at the Federal level may also help the substitute teacher pay situation. The titanic Federal legislation in the works to address the economic effects of the pandemic may have applicable provisions that would require entities to continue pay to its employees in return for federal assistance. PFT counsel and AFTPA are reviewing all language that could assist our members including substitute teachers.

A provision of the approved legislation allows an increase in “flexible instructional days,” and a waiver of the application deadline at the discretion of the Secretary of Education. The language appears to facilitate school districts’ distance learning plans during the 2020 pandemic closure. This provision opens the door to a host of equity issues for families who do not have internet

access or have limited devices in a home with several school-age students.

Additionally, the bill guarantees school employees will not see their pension credit or contributions reduced in any way.

The Pennsylvania legislation, now waiting for the Governor’s signature, would do the following:

- Waive the 180 instructional days requirement;
- Continue pay for all school district employees entitled to receive pay;
- Provide for contributions and credit to PSERS as if the pandemic school closure not occurred;
- Provide CDC recommended cleaning materials, protective clothing and gear to employees responsible for cleaning schools;
- Require written notice to parents/guardians of students with IEPs who receive services under IDEA regarding the District’s plan to ensure the student receives a free and appropriate public education as required under IDEA;
- Ensure that school districts will not receive less subsidy payments because of the pandemic or waiver of the 180 day requirement;
- Direct the Secretary to apply to the U.S. Department of Education for a waiver to allow cancellation of testing for the 2019-20 school year;
- Extend the timeframe for professional educator’s Act 48 continuing education requirements for one (1) year;

The legislation would also, empower the Secretary of Education to:

- Order school closures until the threat to health and safety caused by the pandemic of 2020 has ended,
- Increase the number of “flexible instructional days,” and waive the application deadline,
- Waive the minimum number of hours required for CTE programs,
- Waive the requirement to include performance data in professional employees’ evaluation,
- Waive the minimum number of days required for PreK,
- Waive the twelve (12)-week student teacher requirement,
- Waive the NIMS assessment and NOCTI exam.

The PFT will continue to share with its members the analysis and effects of the various state and federal actions. At the time of the this notice, neither the state nor federal bills have become law.

Coronavirus Facts Versus Fiction: Helpful Links To Bookmark And Share.

While having the entirety of human knowledge at your fingertips is essentially a blessing, in times of crisis, sometimes it’s hard to distinguish the bad information from the good.

The final section of every update we’ll share has a short list of current, up-to-date resources you can count on—but what about specifically controlling rumors and claims?

Here are two additional links that will serve you and yours well in the upcoming weeks to help you separate the wheat from the chaff.

[Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) Rumor Control](#)
[Allegheny County Health Department Rumor Control](#)

Information Links That Bear Repeating:

Below please find additional links providing helpful information you can bookmark and count on as the COVID-19 situation changes and evolves. *It will do so daily.*

[AFT/AFTPA Coronavirus Resources & Updates for Members](#)
[National Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) Coronavirus Resources](#)
[PPS Coronavirus Resources and Links](#)
[PA Department of Health Coronavirus Resources](#)



Coronavirus Self-Checker

A guide to help you make decisions and seek appropriate medical care

[Click the image to visit the page](#)--and be sure to bookmark the CDC as your preferred source for medically sound information.

Please keep in touch and keep sharing your ideas, your questions and your concerns.

In solidarity—

Nina Esposito-Visgitis

Sent via [ActionNetwork.org](https://www.actionnetwork.org). To update your email address, change your name or address, or to stop receiving emails from Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, please [click here](#).