Emergency Telecommuting Meeting

June 21, 2023

Attendance: Angelina Rodriguez Billingsley, Beth Karalak, Audrey Myers, Robert Davies, Mickey Dobbins, Na-Kia Walton, Ben Gifford, Caitlin Janiszewski, Katherine Vorwald, Mohammed Chowdhury

Labor: Why did management not meet with labor for a meet and confer before changing the telecommuting agreement?

Management: We did not think they needed to meet and confer was required given that this was an addendum to the current Telecommuting Policy.

Management: NYS has it’s own OITS which is very large, has about 20 times many times more management positions and advancement opportunities than SED. SED, AG and SC have their own IT departments. SED decided to be proactive given concerns with staff pursuing opportunities elsewhere jumping ship. OITS provides up to 50% telecommuting and SED has lost some staff in this area who have cited telecommuting as a concern.

Labor: The #1 concern of members on recent polls is telecommuting. Stewards received many complaints and questions regarding only IT getting up to 50% telecommuting. It would’ve been nice to have been in the discussion so that we weren’t caught off guard.

Management: There were many levels of approvals which the change needed to go through, and once those approvals were completed we wanted to ~~get it~~ communicate the change out to members as soon as possible.

Labor: IT is not the only program area with staffing issues. ACCES-VR, OP and Special Education were addressed. ACCES-VR, especially the VRC title, is extremely low.

Management: We are aware of challenges with the VRC title specifically, and the overall recruitment challenges for our program offices. were not aware of this.

Labor: You created the new VRC trainee lines (both 1 and 2) to help alleviate this.

Management: IT have tasks which lend specifically to telecommuting.

Labor: So do other areas, Special Education, OP as well as VRCs given we were all able to do our jobs while telecommuting for 2 years during COVID.

SED IT has about 130-150 staff. There are apparently 500 openings in the state in the same title.

Labor: Job postings currently are as follows:

IT-10

OP-30

CFO-18

Higher Ed- 54

P12-51

ACCES-VR-51

OCE 2

IT does not appear to have the highest amount of vacancies.

Management: These numbers are not accurate, there are many things that go into being able to post a job online.

Labor: Please provide us with actual vacancy information.

Management: We don’t know if these numbers can be provided.

Labor: SED is attempting to hire new staff, younger professional are looking for robust telecommuting policies, Tier 5 and 6 do not have the retirement incentives of the past. Private companies are paying close to the same salaries and have high percentages contributed towards 401K plans.

Labor: How do you operate an~~d~~ organization with staff numbers decreasing and not support additional telecommuting?

Management: There is a staff presence at the worksite required for many positions discussed.

Labor: VR Counselors have extremely large caseload sizes and members are losing telecommuting due to not being in compliance. When staff leave, their caseloads are given to remaining staff causes more out of compliance issues and more staff losing telecommuting. James Barron has stated in previous meetings that this would not happen. IT IS HAPPENING.

Labor: Are exit surveys required?

Management: Submissions of exit surveys are low and perhaps PEF could reach out when they know someone is leaving and ask any employees who are separating to complete this survey.

Labor: Can we have copies of the exit surveys?

Management: We don’t think that is possible.

Management: We will share PEF’s concerns, ideas and information to upper management.