**EOE Communication-Return to Work**

Dear Colleague,

I am writing today to convey my continued appreciation for your extraordinary efforts in delivering uninterrupted high-quality services during these challenging times and to give you an update on what to expect for the remainder of this calendar year.

Within the education agencies and across the entire Executive Branch, certain critical public services continue to be delivered by staff reporting in-person to work on a full-time or part-time basis. Those services not delivered in-person continue to be provided through expanded telework. The commitment and creativity of staff at all levels to meet elevated and unprecedented needs during the COVID-19 public health crisis, regardless of where and how they are working, has been nothing short of remarkable.

After twenty-two weeks of experience in this new environment, we are well positioned to assess how these adjustments to traditional work expectations, made out of necessity, can be leveraged to inform what a new normal might look like. To that end, a cross-Secretariat working group will be formed to provide recommendations for how agencies should approach engaging and empowering their workforce in the future. The working group will be asked to deliver these recommendations to the Governor and members of the Cabinet by the end of the calendar year.

For those of you who have been working remotely since March, it is likely that the work environment you experience in the future will be different from the past, and provide new and important opportunities for workplace flexibility, enhanced engagement and collaborative service delivery.

We recognize that many of you are appropriately seeking clarity on next steps, including when you may be asked to return to the workplace. I want to share the following information with you that speaks to steps that will guide any future changes in staff assignments:

**Unless otherwise directed by their managers, all staff teleworking for part or all of their work schedule will continue to do so until the end of the calendar year, at which time the status of the new effort to redefine how we work will help inform a future return date**. Teleworking staff have been alerted to the training and other requirements under the [Commonwealth’s revised Telework Policy](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/executive-branch-telework-policy) – compliance is essential for maintaining this fundamental workforce response to COVID-19.

In any cases where shifts from telework to full or partial in-person services are necessary, **all efforts will be extended to allow for the longest possible notice to staff and union representatives.** While the requirement for notice in collective bargaining agreements speaks to 10 days, every effort will be undertaken to afford employees the longest possible period to transition to any new assignment.

In the event you are informed that you need to return to the workplace, and if you are a person with a disability and need a reasonable accommodation or a temporary adjustment, please contact your agency’s ADA Coordinator. [Access the ADA Coordinator list](https://www.mass.gov/americans-with-disabilities-act-compliance-for-executive-branch-agencies) here.

Please be assured that any required return to the workplace will be deliberate and thoughtful. Necessary safety and health measures are in place to support employees who are currently working on site, as well as any additional returning employees. We will continue to work with our union partners on all these matters. [Visit the Returning to the Workplace page to learn more](https://www.mass.gov/returning-to-the-workplace).

I appreciate your patience, adaptability, and diligence in your work for the children, students, and families of the Commonwealth.

Signature

James A. Peyser

Secretary of Education