

Chair Dexter, members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Nancy Tidwell, I'm a member of SEIU Local 503, and I work at the DMV in Salem. I have worked for the DMV for 10 years. I love my job, and I know that it's important to keep our state going during COVID. Frontline state workers are essential workers, and we deserve to feel safe at work; unfortunately many of us do not. I am submitting this letter to you to share what my experience has been as a frontline state worker throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am a TSR1 at the N.Salem field office. This means that I am not only at the front counter face to face with the general public, I also conduct driving tests. This is where we get into someone's vehicle and ride with them for approximately 20-30 minutes. Some of our customers are required to have an IID installed in their vehicle in order to do their test. In these cases if the alarm sounds off, we are required to have them stop the vehicle and we are required to step out of the vehicle in traffic while the driver removes their mask, blows into the IID to keep the vehicle running, they put their mask back on and we re-enter their vehicle and continue the test.

As of today my office is seeing between 250-280 customers per day and doing 15-20 drive tests per week. Our job requires us to physically touch the customers documents without any safe guards. There is no UV lighting or sanitation process for touching these items. When we take a customer's photo for their ID or license, we have the customer remove their mask. Again there are no safety measures for this task.

Due to covid, all of our offices are taking appointments only. With this in mind, we have set up a check in point at our front doors. I myself have done this many times. There is no barrier around us. We of course wear masks but those who approach us do not necessarily wear them. Many times the general public is angry and will lean into us, yelling, coughing, etc because they do not want to make an appointment but they want their issue handled immediately. Unfortunately, many of our employees have contracted Covid due to this.

As of today we still have what looks like clear plastic garbage bags taped to PVC piping between our counters. We have been given rubber gloves, and basic disposable masks, and we have a can of Lysol available to us. When doing a drive test, we have face shields, masks, seat covers, and booties to cover our shoes. Having to wear all the extra gear on our faces compromises our ability to see the traffic around us and our ability to speak clear enough for the driver to hear us. This in itself is a hazard. These are just a few examples of what we have been dealing with.

Personally, I have health issues just like many of our employees. I have been required to use all of my leave time in order to get through my radiation treatments. I have approximately 33% lung function according to my pulmonary doctor and oncologist. That was prior to the radiation treatments. I have been told by the DMV that once I have finished my 8 weeks working with SEIU, I will be required to return to my normal job duties or lose my job and all benefits including medical. I have written orders from my pulmonary doctor restricting me from working within 6 feet of others and an ADA. DMV has told me that I will have to find a way to get a release to return to work and they can not or will not accommodate my ADA. There is NO safeguard in place for those that have medical issues such as mine or for those that are seen as high-risk. My children are angry and scared for what I am dealing with. They have already lost their dad, they shouldn't have to risk losing their mom as well.

As I have explained to my children, I have no choice. I am the only income to my household. I am a frontline essential state employee. When all the other government offices were closing and allowing their employees to telework, we remained open. We kept our truckers on the road and quickly started taking in appointments for the general public. At no time have we been offered hazard pay or protection for those that are high-risk of not surviving covid. It is our most medically fragile employees that have kept the line moving at DMV. Mainly due to the fact that the majority of them do not have children at home still. These are the individuals that are needing someone strong to stand up for us. If we are going to continue to go to work every day and risk our lives, even against doctors orders in some cases, the least our leaders could do is get the vaccines out to us. It is shameful that this group of frontline state employees have been placed on the back burner as though they have no value. It has been these employees that never gave up and they still show up every day.

Thank you for having this hearing and for taking my testimony.

Sincerely,

Nancy Tidwell

Salem