

Dear Friends:

The exceptional work ethic, tireless devotion, and extraordinary compassion of Maine State employees always fills me with pride, but I am deeply grateful for the way you have all risen to meet the unprecedented challenges of this pandemic, including, for many of you, transitioning to working remotely. In fact, State government transitioned nearly 87 percent of our non-public safety workforce to remote work. And, thanks in large part to your ability to adapt, State government has continued providing many of its critical services – services that Maine people need now more than ever. Thank you.

As you know, our Administration has released a four stage plan to gradually restart Maine's economy. The plan, which is a flexible document guided by public health data and subject to revision, is intended to provide the framework for a slow and safe reopening of various sectors of economy, both private and public. To that end, it also outlines the timeframe for State employees to return to work. Under Stage 1 of the plan, which we are currently in, those State employees who are able to work from home are asked to continue doing so. Stage 2 of the plan, which begins this coming Monday, June 1, will see some State employees begin returning to work. However, Stage 2 also asks that employees who are successfully working from home continue to do so. We will continue this gradual transition throughout the summer (Stages 3) and into the fall (Stage 4) so long as it is deemed safe and prudent to do so.

However, knowing that transitioning back to working in an office space may concern you and your family, I wanted you to hear directly from me about some of the work State government is undertaking to ensure that you have a safe place to work. Last month, DAFS Commissioner Figueroa established a Transition Committee comprised of our human resource, property management, and procurement professionals as well as representatives from various departments. This Committee is addressing facility, workspace, workforce, and work rule needs and offering every Department recommended actions to protect your health and safety and that of our clients. For example, Departments are being asked to review shared office space to maximize physical distancing; to implement cloth face covering guidance that can help significantly reduce the transmission of the virus; to limit the number of people in elevators and common areas; to enhance cleaning protocols; and to support teleworking policies, among other measures. This Transition Committee also distributed a statewide employee survey soliciting information and feedback regarding transitioning State employees back to work. More than 7,000 of you completed this survey (thank you!), and we are now closely reviewing your responses. Additionally, our Administration will engage the Building Safety Labor Management Committee as a forum for considering ongoing improvements to the transition process.

Because each department will have different needs based on the population of people it serves and the services it provides, your department leaders will be updating you in the coming days, weeks, and months ahead with specific information about how and when certain employees will transition back to the office, along with potential requirements for returning to your office. Depending on the type of work you do, those requirements may include but are not limited to the wearing of cloth face coverings when leaving your individual work space, such as to exit the building or use the restroom. In all cases, these changes will be based on the shared goal of keeping you and the people we serve healthy and safe.

This pandemic has required us to adapt, and in the months ahead it will continue to require us to do so. Although we will change how we conduct our business for the people of Maine, what will not change is our commitment to doing the job well and to serving our State and its people to the best of our abilities. You have done that every day throughout this pandemic, and I know you will continue to do so in the future.

Please do not forget that we are here to help if you need it during this time of uncertainty. Your manager can guide you to appropriate support. [Human Resources professionals](#) have knowledge of benefit options and resources, and, as part of our benefit package, [Living Resources](#) (Employee Assistance Program) is available to you and your family members for assistance.

And because I am a parent and a grandparent, I have to conclude by saying: please maintain physical distancing; wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds several times throughout the day; use a cloth face covering in public places where physical distancing is difficult; and stay home when you are sick or not feeling well.

Thank you for all you do. It is the honor of my lifetime to work beside you.

Sincerely,

Janet T. Mills
Governor of Maine