

## **Draft letter to the editor, Version 2: Deals with telecommuting issues**

To the editor:

My name is XXX and I am a member of United University Professions, the union that represents the faculty and staff at the State University of New York. I want to call attention to a community health and safety issue that should concern all New Yorkers, as our state deals with the emergency of the coronavirus.

When the SUNY system shut down in March at the start of the pandemic in New York, my union reached a historic agreement with the state that allowed our members to telecommute on a full-time or part-time basis. Now, as the start of the fall semester approaches, the state has extended the telecommuting agreement to Oct. 2. We hope to see it extended to the end of the calendar year.

But UUP has received numerous and disturbing reports that some SUNY campuses are not respecting the telecommuting agreement. Instead, they are insisting that employees report to campus at the start of the semester, unless they have a medically necessary reason to telecommute, or have childcare issues.

We are asking state lawmakers to intervene. Many of the faculty and staff at SUNY who are not comfortable returning to campus have a very good reason to feel this way. Reopening requires the largest migration of people, students, since the start of the coronavirus and campus plans vary from campus to campus and don't require testing, contact tracing and fail to mandate the wearing of masks at all times in classrooms and common areas. We are concerned about our health and safety, but also the health and safety of our students and their families as they are asked to take on risk that could be lessened.

Our union wants to protect our members, and we want to make sure that the coronavirus does not spread throughout our community. Both goals will be vastly easier to accomplish if campus reopening guidelines are clear, consistent and put safety first. We also hold that our members should not be required to justify their desire to telecommute during a pandemic that has killed nearly 33,000 New Yorkers.

UUP members are committed to educating and supporting SUNY students. Faculty and staff have performed selflessly since March to accomplish both goals. Now, we need lawmakers, and all New Yorkers, to support our members in their very reasonable desire to feel safe in this unprecedented public health crisis.

Thank you.