



## COVID-19: FOUR IMPORTANT BILLS INCLUDE COs THANKS TO OUR ADVOCACY

• MCO is backing several bills introduced in the Michigan legislature and the U.S. Congress to support workers on the front lines during COVID-19. And, we are in discussions with legislators on the language of these bills to make sure corrections officers are specifically included.

**The Helping Emergency Responders Overcome Emergency Situations Act of 2020 (or the HEROES Act of 2020, [H.R. 6433](#))** would give a tax holiday to first responders, including COs, who work in counties with at least one case of COVID-19. Income of up to \$50,000 would be exempt from federal income tax for the period of Feb. 15, 2020 to June 15, 2020. If the legislation is enacted, first responders will be able to deduct income earned during that time when filing their taxes.

**The state has two versions of the Helping Emergency Responders Overcome Emergency Situations Act, [S.B. 900](#), and [H.B. 5749](#),** that would exempt these workers from state income tax for the same period. It includes a provision that would allow couples who file jointly to exempt income up to \$100,000 if both people are qualified first responders.

**The Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act (which is also being called the HEROES Act, [H.R. 6800](#))** is a broad recovery package. It would provide almost \$1 trillion to state and local governments grappling with revenue shortfalls. This boost would enable governments to balance their budgets and keep people like health care workers and law enforcement on the job. If passed, certain essential workers, including corrections officers, would qualify for hazard pay. The bill would also ramp up production of PPE, ventilators, tests, and other medical equipment and streamline their delivery to states.

Congress passed H.R. 6800 last week. The other bills are currently in committee. They will need to be voted out of committee, passed in the House and Senate, and then signed by the President (for federal bills) or the governor (for state bills) before becoming law.

MCO has been advocating for these bills at the state and national level. Executive Director Andy Potter and Political Director Jonovan Luckey have been in constant contact with legislators to make sure corrections officers

are included in any legislation that deals with front line workers or first responders. They are urging lawmakers to provide relief for those who are risking their health every day for the public good. Front line staff have stepped up to meet this moment of crisis; now our elected officials should step up for us.

We will keep you posted on the progress of these bills.

• There are more than 80 workers' comp cases being processed now. Remember, if you contracted COVID-19, please fill out the MCO Legal Department's form and contact our outside law firm for assistance. Details on both are at [mco-seiu.org/COVID-19](http://mco-seiu.org/COVID-19).

• Hazard pay appeared on the May 14 paycheck for the first time. Last week, we reported on a problem with the state's payroll system that may have shorted some COs on their payment. [Read about the issue on our website.](#) If your hazard payment amount is not correct, please let your personnel office and MCO chapter officials know.

• There have been 331 cases confirmed among MDOC staff and 2,243 among inmates. [MDOC posts the latest numbers \(broken down by facility\) here.](#)

Thank you, members, for your dedication during this time. Stay well.

## WEAPONS, FIGHTS KEEP BARAGA OFFICERS BUSY

Baraga officers found two weapons May 8 in a Level V segregation unit.

An officer overheard inmates talking about weapons that one of them gave three other prisoners. Staff searched the three inmates and found two of them had pieces of sharpened metal. The weapons appear to have been

made from light fixtures in segregation cells.

COs also broke up two yard fights May 9. Both were gang-related and involved Level V inmates. The facility was placed on a modified lock down. No serious injuries were reported.

Great work, AMF officers!

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