

## Minnesota Legislature Returns for Special Session

The Legislature is currently in the first special session of 2020. Negotiations over a bonding bill, federal COVID funding for local units of government, small business loans and grants, supplemental budget requests and more have all resumed after these issues were left unresolved at the conclusion of the regular legislative session.

Reforms to address police accountability have also been added to the list of priority issues for lawmakers. A prolonged special session, or multiple special sessions, is very likely given the complexity and volume of issues being worked on.

### Bonding:

All parties agree bonding is a top priority to help aid our economic recovery and rebuild neighborhoods impacted by the unrest after the murder of George Floyd. We expect an agreement may be reached very soon for a bonding bill over \$1 billion.

### Local Government COVID Funding:

As a refresher, the Federal Government appropriated significant resources to state and local units of government to respond to COVID-19 (MN received around \$2 billion). Legislators seem to have reached an agreement on how to allocate over \$840 million to counties, cities, and towns. Under this agreement, counties will receive \$121.28/person; cities with a population over 5,000 will receive \$75.34/person; towns with a population between 200 and 4,999 will receive \$25/person.

Hennepin and Ramsey counties, who applied for and received their aid directly with the Federal Government, will be able to spend everything



AFSCME members gather at the State Capitol (photo courtesy House Information Services).

they received. However, any unspent funds after November 15th would be transferred to HCMC and Regions Hospital respectively.

The situation at the Capitol is fluid and constantly changing. For the latest news, follow us at @afscmemn5 on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, check our website, and keep an eye out for action alerts via text and email.

### City of Duluth Workers Ratify MOU

After financial issues at the City of Duluth brought painful layoffs, members of AFSCME Local 66 knew they had a difficult decision to make.

This spring, the City of Duluth laid off 51 AFSCME members, citing COVID-related closures and budget shortfalls. This loss of income left these families in the lurch, and their union family missing their support and expertise in the workplace.

On June 2, AFSCME local 66 City of Duluth workers voted to ratify an MOU that temporarily freezes wages

and steps, and includes 18 unpaid working days.

“This was not an easy decision, but our members recognize that this is in the best interest of working people and, most importantly, help preserve the delivery of services our residents need and help prevent further layoffs,” said City of Duluth Bargaining Unit Chair Wendy Wohlwend.

Though the MOU will hopefully prevent additional layoffs, Local 66 members were not satisfied to leave their laid off union siblings out on their own. They immediately began a fundraising campaign to bridge the gap and help these families get back on their feet.

The fundraising campaign has already surpassed its goal, raising nearly \$7,000 to cover basic expenses for these members and their families. We’re so proud of our union family’s generosity!

We will continue the fight. The fundraiser is still ongoing: contribute at [paypal.me/pools/c/8oPMk22Y0q](https://paypal.me/pools/c/8oPMk22Y0q).

## Members Host Weekly Mental Health Check Ins

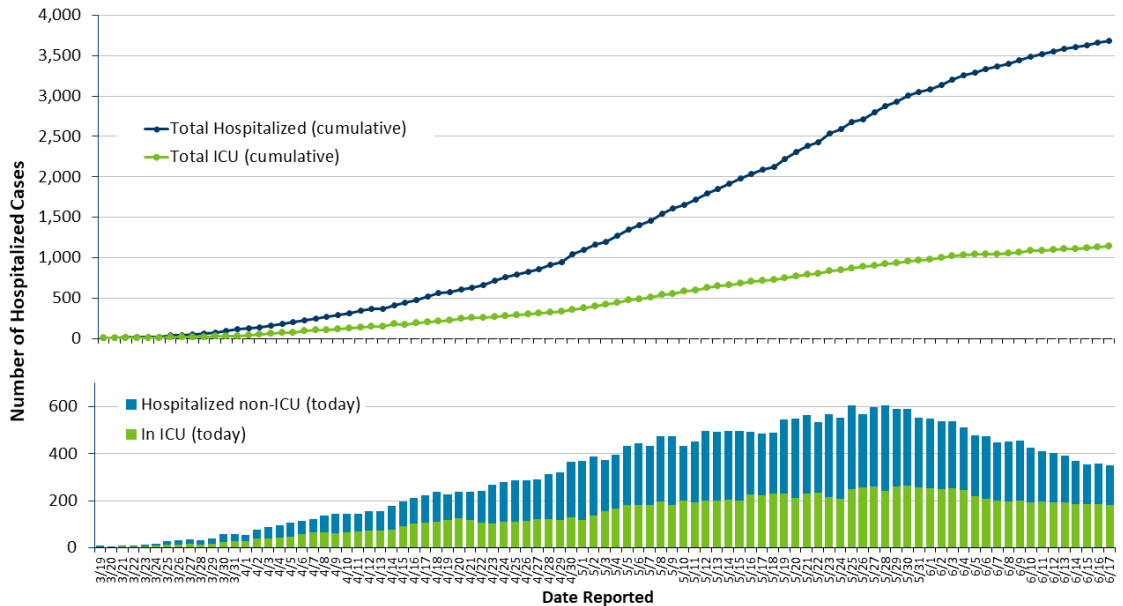
After AFSCME members hosted six mental health summits earlier this year, they knew the work they started had to continue. So they organized a weekly mental health check-in that brings together union members and perfect strangers to break down barriers, get to know one another, and share their stories.

This weekly virtual check-in provides a safe and private space for everybody to come together, share their emotions, struggles, and hopes of what a better, modernized mental health system can look like. AFSCME members then organized a new group called Minnesotans for Better Mental Health Care, a broad coalition of workers to “unite and advocate for higher standards, better services and working conditions for all of those affected with mental health issues.”

Stacy Lamke, Vice President and Chief Steward of Local 1574 in the Brainerd area, has been actively involved in the Mental Health Summits that Council 5 members organized and led. Her work at the Minnesota Department of Human Services gives her a unique perspective into our current mental health system and the need for modernization and critical investments.

Stacy deeply knows the importance of why mental health matters and how these check-ins can improve our shared humanity.

“Mental health and these weekly check-ins have been critically important to me because they remind us that we are not alone,” said Stacy. “They allow people to share and understand what their fellow workers are going through and recognize that we have much more in common with one another than what divides us.”



**We've flattened the curve in Minnesota, but we can't afford to be complacent. Continue to wear masks, socially distance, and - of course - wash your hands. (photo courtesy MN Dept of Health)**

Members now host weekly virtual check ins every Tuesday morning at 9am. They hope to expand to more days and times.

“All of us have a story to share - all of us have lessons and teachings that others can benefit from,” Stacy said. “Ending the stigma of mental health, telling our stories, and fighting for critical investments to modernize our mental health system are our goals. Together - we will achieve them!”

Please join us in this movement. You can go to the AFSCME Council 5 website for more information on their work and join the weekly check in.

### **L844 Members at St Paul Public Schools reach TA**

This week, members of AFSCME Local 844 employed at St. Paul Public Schools reached a TA on a 2-year contract for the clerical and technical contract group.

The contract provides two cost of living adjustments and preserves the wage step increases for both years. In addition, the contract increases the Employer's share of the health insurance by \$20 each year, shifting the health care burden away from members. The contract also improves overtime language and protecting

seniority for distribution workers.

The Local 844 negotiation team is planning a series of informational Zoom meetings before a ratification vote. If the contract is ratified, it will go before the St. Paul School Board, likely at the July 21st board meeting. More information about the ratification vote will be provided in the days to come.

### **Robbinsdale Schools Ratify New Contract**

Local 499 members at Robbinsdale Schools ratified their recent Tentative Agreement on a 2-year contract. Their new contract will give members up to a 5% increase in wages over the term of the contract, and also increases the Employer's contribution towards Health Insurance coverage costs.

Congrats, family!

### **Resources for Members**

Stay up to date on all the latest news by following @afscmemn5 on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Get guidance and resources at [afscmemn.org](http://afscmemn.org) under the COVID-19 tab.

Look for action alerts via email and text so you know when to take action to protect working families. We are all in this together, siblings.