

**American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees**  
*One strong united voice for Minnesota workers*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 20, 2022

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**Move Minnesota Forward Budget Honors Frontline Workers and Invests in Our Future**

**South St. Paul, MN** - AFSCME Council 5 Executive Director Julie Bleyhl released the following statement after Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan released their 'Move Minnesota Forward' budget:

“Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan's 'Move Minnesota Forward' budget will positively transform our state into one of the most worker-friendly and pro-community states in the country. This budget respects the heroic work of AFSCME members across our state that have contracted COVID-19 at work while continuing to keep Minnesotans safe, healthy, and thriving, at great risk to their health and that of their loved ones.

"Workers like Joshua Earlywine, a Corrections Officer at MCF- Moose Lake was forced to sleep in an ice house in his driveway to protect his loved ones from contracting COVID when his facility experienced an outbreak. Sharon Turner, an intake worker at Hennepin Healthcare risked exposure every day to COVID while checking in patients to the hospital. Mollie Miller, a paraprofessional in Roseville Public Schools cared for children of essential workers in school when these workers were in desperate need of child care. Willie Snyder, a residential counselor at Ramsey County's Lake Owasso Residence cares for vulnerable adults and keeps them safe by sanitizing their rooms and meeting their needs. Workers like Josh, Sharon, Mollie, Willie and countless others go to work every day to keep our state functioning; They Make Minnesota Happen. These stories are all too familiar in countless workplaces across our state. Their work must not only be honored in words, but in deeds. Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan's proposal of \$1,500 'hero pay' checks to nearly 670,000 workers who had to work in-person during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic treats many of our members with the respect they deserve. AFSCME Council 5 has proudly worked in coalition with labor and community allies to honor and respect the work of our frontline heroes and provide them 'hero pay.'

“Governor Walz's proposed budget will place massive investments in our higher education institutions to address lower student enrollment, invests in our long-term care workforce that is stretched to maximum capacity, completes border-to-border broadband access for all Minnesotans, funds state agency supplemental requests, and funds other key priorities that will Move Minnesota Forward.

“Our union stands ready to work with Governor Walz and the Legislature to ensure our members' voices and ideas are truly heard during the upcoming legislative session. Our members will be actively engaged in the pursuit of our union's legislative priorities at the Capitol that will build a better Minnesota.”

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*AFSCME Council 5 is a labor union representing more than 43,000 workers across Minnesota. We advocate for excellence in services to the public, dignity in the workplace, and opportunity and prosperity for all workers.*