
Communication with DHHS & SOS Falls on Deaf Ears - DOC Says Sure

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Last year, Gov. Snyder sent State workers a letter stating; "I also am relying on you to raise to the highest levels, including to my desk, any situation that you feel threatens the health or safety of the people of Michigan." Apparently some of the Departmental Directors did not get the memo.

It has always been the position of UAW Local 6000 that the relationship between the union and the Department administrators should not be adversarial in nature. One of the most critical roles of the union is to ensure a healthy, safe, and effective work environment for the membership, which is why we hold monthly meetings with lower-level managers. However, it is clear many Department Directors are unaware of (or do not care to acknowledge) the severe problems facing workers, such as staff shortages, extremely low morale, bullying, and other issues that can lead to disaster.

To give Departmental Directors a direct means of communication with their field staff, without the "filtering" of lower-level managers, the leaders of the State's three largest departments received invitations to participate in "Directors' Panels". These panels were to be held across the state.

On April 25, 2017, Local 6000 sent to Secretary of State Ruth Johnson, and Directors Nick Lyons of Department of Health and Human Service and Heidi Washington of the Department of Corrections communications requesting their attendance at the panels and explaining the goals of the panels. The letter noted:

"The membership of the UAW Local 6000 State of Michigan Employees would like to cordially invite you to participate in three

Directors' Panels. The Secretary of State and the directors of the Departments of Health and Human Services and Corrections have been invited to join the membership at their district meetings in June.

The purpose of these panels is to provide you with an opportunity to speak directly with employees from your department.

The panels will occur on:

- June 8, 2017 at 6:30pm – UAW Local 6000, 3350 N. Grand River Ave., Lansing, MI 48906

- June 21, 2017 at 5:30pm – Pickleman's Pub, 14045 State M-28, Co Rd 460, Newberry, MI 49868

- June 27, 2017 at 6:00pm – UAW Region 1, 27800 George Merrelli Drive, Warren, MI 48092

Questions will be submitted by our membership prior to each panel. Questions from the audience will only be allowed if agreed upon by each director. We truly hope you are able to attend these panels. If you are unable to join us, please consider sending a representative.

Mr. Lyons's office was the first to respond with a phone call politely declining the invitation. When the caller was reminded that any upper level manager was invited to attend, Local 6000 were advised that not one was available on any of the dates provided.

An email was received from the office of Secretary Johnson's Chief of Staff: "Secretary Johnson uses a variety of forums, events, social media and branch office visits to connect with MDOS employees.

Thanks to the multiple methods she uses to reach out, the Secretary already reaches a vast audience. She appreciates the offer to attend the Director's Panel but respectfully declines". Pamela Bennett, an upper level SOS administrator was suggested by the Local to the

Secretary's staff as an alternate, but to no avail.

Though Heidi Washington advised of her unavailability for the June 8th panel, she offered to send an administrator, and indicated the other dates were on her calendar. This action of facing issues head on is not surprising coming from the DOC's director, who from personal observation and from the observations of many members, showed unshaken leadership in the wake of the recent tragic death of Agent Candice Dunn.

Local 6000 have opened its doors to those who report directly to the Governor, and the offer still stands.

Maybe the Governor needs to resend his memo.

- Marseille Allen, UAW Local 6000 Legislative Liaison -