

As Governor Justice often reminds us, West Virginia has the largest share of its population in the country who is at risk of serious illness if they contract COVID-19. The governor has been a leader in protecting vulnerable populations throughout this crisis, and it's disappointing to hear him dismiss the concerns around continuing to protect these populations as the state begins to reopen. Among the groups that signed onto this letter are frontline service and health workers, communities of color, and disability rights groups, all of whom represent populations that are themselves at elevated risk or who have family members at risk of serious illness due to underlying medical conditions.

The governor has the authority and the obligation to protect at-risk workers from being forced into work situations which put them at significant risk of coming into contact with COVID-19. West Virginia code states that a person is not disqualified for unemployment insurance benefits if they leave their employment for health reasons, including a condition that could be worsened or aggravated by work. We're also asking for more transparency out of WorkForce WV, including that the agency publicly release the conditions their office is using to determine suitable work during the COVID-19 crisis.

Our intention is to work with the Justice Administration and WorkForce WV to ensure that at-risk workers are not forced to choose between their health and their finances. Public health is not a political issue.

Our original letter to Governor Justice and WorkForce WV can be found [here](#)