



February 16, 2022

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I am writing to request a meeting to discuss an urgent matter affecting USDA employees represented by the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) in the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). In our meeting on March 4, 2021, you expressed a strong commitment to working with NTEU to rebuild the trust and morale of the workforce. Unfortunately, FNS has threatened to undermine those efforts by refusing to bargain regarding telework and remote work opportunities during negotiations regarding the return to the workplace.

As you know, USDA issued Departmental Regulation 4080-811-002 on November 22, 2021, which provides expanded telework and remote work opportunities for USDA employees. NTEU requested to bargain shortly thereafter to ensure that negotiations would be completed before employees returned to the workplace. However, FNS has refused to bargain a mid-term agreement to make the expanded telework and remote work opportunities available to employees in the NTEU bargaining unit when they return to the workplace, insisting that it will not make any expanded telework and remote work opportunities available until there is a new collective bargaining agreement (CBA).

During negotiations regarding the return to the workplace, FNS has refused to bargain regarding any proposals involving telework and remote work opportunities, including proposals that would allow employees to request telework arrangements consistent with the USDA policy on a temporary basis and even proposals that would allow high-risk employees and employees with caregiving obligations to request temporary telework arrangements to allow them to safely perform their work when employees are directed to return to the workplace.

The agency's refusal to bargain regarding telework proposals during return-to-work negotiations threatens to place the health and safety of FNS employees at unnecessary risk if employees are recalled to the workplace before a new CBA is ratified. This has already caused substantial concern for employees in the bargaining unit and the impact will be far greater if the agency continues down this path. It is time to resolve this so that we can work to rebuild the trust and morale of the workforce rather than placing employees at unnecessary risk when they return to the workplace.

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I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these and other important matters with you at your earliest convenience. of my staff is available to help set up a time for us to meet. She can be reached via e-mail at or by phone at

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony M. Reardon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anthony M. Reardon  
National President

cc: Cindy Long, FNS  
Stacy Dean, FNS  
Ken Moffett, NTEU  
Frank Barczykowski, NTEU  
Michael Robinson, NTEU  
Folasade Omogun, NTEU