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March 6, 2020

Thomas Brady
Director
Department of Defense Education Activity
4800 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22350

Dear Mr. Brady,

On Feb. 29, the Overseas Federation of Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers sent an urgent request that you take immediate action to safeguard the health and well-being of the 700 teachers at DoDEA schools in Italy, Spain, Bahrain and Turkey. Many of these dedicated women and men continue to be needlessly and recklessly placed in harm's way because they are being forced by local DoDEA managers to report to their schools—even as we await a response from you.

In the week since our letter, coronavirus has become a pandemic in Italy, where 3,858 people have been infected and 148 have died. The Italian government understands the serious and immediate risk posed by this global health crisis and has acted to contain the virus' spread by closing all schools through mid-March. But you, and DoDEA, have failed to lift a finger.

Incredibly, in DoDEA schools across Northern Italy, one of the areas hit hardest by the virus, teachers must physically travel to classrooms under a penalty of loss of pay—in defiance of both common sense and the Italian government's order. How is it that schools deemed unsafe for students by the Italian government are safe for teachers? No school district in the United States would do this, so why is DoDEA doing it in Italy?

DoDEA is callously flouting the ordinances of our host nation and placing people in the communities where our teachers live and serve in peril. We are gravely concerned that DoDEA—through this blatant disregard for the safety of teachers, their families and members of our host communities—may be inadvertently spreading and exacerbating this global health emergency.

We urge you to immediately:

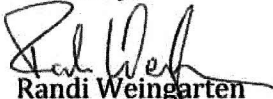
- Direct DoDEA managers in any countries or areas with outbreaks to close schools and allow teachers to telework safely from home;
- Provide and order prophylactic coronavirus testing for teachers who have continued to report to schools in all areas with outbreaks; and

- Meet with our union to develop a DoDEA schools and staff coronavirus protocol that includes guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization. In places the outbreak has not yet reached, this protocol would include good ventilation and hygiene, disinfection procedures and employer-provided education. In places combatting outbreaks, it would include closing schools, allowing telework and distance learning, and being prepared with a comprehensive continuity of operations plan. It would also include doing the utmost to prevent the spread of the virus into host countries.

Our union's team of experts in health and safety, education and public policy continues to work to ensure the well-being of teachers and the students they serve in DoDEA schools. We ask that you work with us, not against us, in our efforts.

Now is the time to take immediate action to protect the education professionals who teach the children of our brave service members abroad. A failure to do so would send a message that you and DoDEA not only don't care about our teachers, but also aren't serious about helping the international community in its effort to halt this deepening global crisis.

Sincerely,


Randi Weingarten
President, AFT


Linda Hogan
President, Overseas Federation of Teachers