

SEIU Healthcare Wisconsin: Frontline healthcare workers thank Gov. Evers for leadership on personal protective equipment, call for seat at the table

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WISCONSIN — Healthcare workers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic reacted to the Evers administration's announcement that \$150 million of CARES Act funds will be dedicated to procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) by thanking Gov. Evers and calling on the administration to make sure healthcare workers have a seat at the decision-making table.

"Thank you, Governor Evers. As nurses like me have stepped up to protect the public and care for our patients, we are grateful to have the Governor's support to get us life-saving PPE," said Pat Raes, registered nurse in Madison. "Governor Evers' leadership on PPE will help us get through the remainder of this first surge of COVID-19 and help us prepare for the resurgence that is coming. On behalf of our union, SEIU Healthcare Wisconsin, and the tens of thousands of healthcare workers in our state, let me thank you."

Across the state, healthcare workers have suffered from the serious lack of PPE during their service on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. "No matter what nursing home administrators say, healthcare workers like me do not have enough N-95 masks, gowns, and gloves. We are re-using masks and gowns so much that I have used the same mask for weeks now," said Randi Payne, a certified nursing assistant in Sheboygan. Healthcare workers have been forced to re-use PPE due to shortages and poor planning by healthcare system management.

"We've been fighting for adoption of a Healthcare Heroes Act that would ensure all

of us on the frontlines have access to PPE, along with hazard pay, healthcare coverage, and paid sick time,” said Ramon Argandona, an environmental services worker in Madison and President of SEIU Healthcare Wisconsin. “Governor Evers’ action has helped advance one of the core elements of what we have called for in a Healthcare Heroes Act. We thank him for his decisive leadership.”

“However, a blank check for the same healthcare systems whose poor planning and sub-par decision-making created the PPE crisis in the COVID-19 pandemic in the first place will not solve the matter for healthcare workers,” Argandona added. “Healthcare workers need a seat at the table when decisions are made about PPE. Now is the time for Governor Evers to convene the hospital systems, nursing homes, and homecare agencies in Wisconsin along with representatives of the frontline healthcare workers staffing them, for a frontline healthcare PPE council. Together, representatives of healthcare workers and healthcare executives can make decisions on PPE priorities and particulars. Healthcare workers need a seat at the table, and Governor Evers can make it happen with the \$150 million he has rightly put into addressing the PPE crisis.”