

GUIDANCE FOR TELEWORK PUBLIC COMMENT

CWA
LOCAL 1036

The Civil Service Commission will soon provide the opportunity for public comment on a permanent telework policy. In preparation, we are calling on state and judiciary members to draft their public comments to the CSC. **Public comments are a chance for CWA members to express why we need a permanent and expanded telework policy, and we need all hands on deck.**

We are collecting both digital and paper comments to be filed with the CSC and we encourage you to consider writing your comment in both formats. Once you've drafted your comment, please email it and/or bring it to your shop steward. The guide below is meant to help you draft an effective public comment.

STRUCTURE

Address your comment to the CSC and begin by clearly stating what you are commenting on and who you are, this can include sharing your position as a state worker. While you can comment anonymously, your role as a state worker is crucial in determining the policy that will guide your working conditions.

Next, share your support for a **permanent expanded telework policy**, and be sure to tell them why you feel this way. A few talking points that might help guide your answer include:

- Stating that you are more or equally productive when working remotely, and offering an example of a time when you worked on or completed a project while teleworking.
- Expressing concern for the environment and inviting the CSC to see the environmental benefits of a permanent work-from-home policy.
- Sharing how telework has made it easier for you to do your job well (more accessibility, the use of technology that helps streamline your work, fewer distractions associated with the workplace).
- Reminding the CSC of the successes of telework during the first stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how telework benefits workplace safety.
- Explaining the nature of your work, what amount of it can be done remotely, and why telework should not be limited to just two days, but rather, be a flexible policy dependent on remote workload.
- Sharing why you believe telework ultimately benefits the state (cost-effectiveness, modernizing the workplace and the state).
- Expressing how telework helps with the retention and recruitment of employees, keeps the public sector competitive with the private sector, and remains successful in both the private and public sector via federally implemented (i.e. EPA) remote work policies.
- If you haven't been allowed to access telework, share why you should by explaining the nature of your work and/or pointing to other cohorts that engage in similar work and have been given the opportunity to telework.
- Explaining how teleworking affords you a better work/life balance that incentivizes you to remain working as a state employee.

As you offer your support for expanded telework, be sure to provide evidence that justifies your support. Evidence can be examples of projects completed while teleworking, personal experience with the policy, departmental successes with telework, and studies that bolster your claims.

TIPS

Keep your comment concise. The CSC will be looking through hundreds of comments during this period, therefore your comment will be most effective if the CSC can quickly identify and understand your support for telework.

- Select the reason most significant to you. There is no need to cover every single reason why telework is good in your comment. Choose what's most important to you and what you can speak to best.
- Use your credibility as a state worker to your advantage. No one better understands the issue of teleworking for the state than the workers who have been doing so in the last four years.
- Provide reasoning and justification for your support. It is important to demonstrate to the CSC that there is concrete evidence of the success of telework that state workers can point to.
- If you don't want to submit your own comment, consider collaborating with your coworkers on a joint comment of support that unites around one issue. For example, some workers at DEP may want to submit a joint comment on the environmental benefits of telework.
- Encourage your family and friends to submit a comment of their own in support of telework. The general public will be able to comment as well, so don't hesitate to speak to the people in your life about why it's important to support telework for state and judiciary workers.

SAMPLE PUBLIC COMMENTS

Increased Productivity

NJ Civil Service Commission
Division of Appeals and Regulatory Affairs
PO Box 312
Trenton, NJ 08625-0312

Dear New Jersey Civil Service Commission,

I am writing to comment on and express my support for an expanded, permanent telework policy for state workers. My name is (_____) and I have been a (Title) at the (Department) for (x) years and have had the opportunity to telework since March 2020. The ability to telework has made me more productive by granting me a more flexible schedule for meeting and collaborating with my coworkers. It has also helped to minimize distractions while working and allowed me to focus better on my work. While teleworking, I have worked on and completed numerous projects like (project title and description), which was crucial for the state. Making telework a permanent policy for the state means I can continue to do my best work to serve the people of New Jersey.

Excluded from Telework Based on Job Type

NJ Civil Service Commission
Division of Appeals and Regulatory Affairs
PO Box 312
Trenton, NJ 08625-0312

Dear New Jersey Civil Service Commission,

I am writing to comment on and express my support for an expanded, permanent telework policy for state workers. My

name is (_____) and I have been a (Title) at the (Department) for (x) years. While many of my colleagues have had the opportunity to telework, I have been excluded from participating in this policy. My job involves in-person field work, however, there are other elements of my job which can be performed remotely. On days where I file paperwork and write reports, working from home is both feasible and likely more productive for me because I can do my work without the added stress of my hour-long commute to the office. I believe everyone who can telework should have the opportunity to do so and I urge the Civil Service Commission to consider making the telework policy more flexible.

Recruitment and Retention Benefits

NJ Civil Service Commission
Division of Appeals and Regulatory Affairs
PO Box 312
Trenton, NJ 08625-0312

Dear New Jersey Civil Service Commission,

I am writing to comment on and express my support for an expanded, permanent telework policy for state and judiciary workers. My name is (_____) and I have been a (Title) at the (Department) for (x) years. I have friends who work in similar fields for the private sector, and many of them have either hybrid or fully remote schedules. Since the onset of the pandemic, the private sector has modernized to include different modalities, and in so doing, has become even more attractive to skilled professionals who could greatly serve the public sector. Having a permanent telework policy in the NJ public sector is necessary to be a competitive workplace that can recruit new employees and retain those we already have. Even the federal government has implemented permanent telework policies at departments like the EPA. If our federal colleagues can work remotely, why can't we? The pandemic is proof that we can keep New Jersey running regardless of where we're working from, and we should be taking advantage of the ways technology can broaden and simplify our workplace. Permanent telework would incentivize us to continue serving New Jersey every day, and bring new, bright professionals into the public sector.

Denied Combined Telework and AWP Participation

NJ Civil Service Commission
Division of Appeals and Regulatory Affairs
PO Box 312
Trenton, NJ 08625-0312

Dear New Jersey Civil Service Commission,

I am writing to comment on and express my support for an expanded, permanent telework policy for state and judiciary workers. My name is (_____) and I have been a (Title) at the (Department) for just under a year. One of the benefits that attracted me to the public sector was the workplace flexibility, but upon joining, I learned that telework benefits wouldn't be available to me until a year after my start date. I also learned that although my colleagues in the past had been able to participate in both telework and the Alternate Workweek Program, I would only be allowed to participate in one. My day-to-day job duties mostly involve desk work and online meetings; I find it difficult to understand why the flexibility of my schedule is being arbitrarily limited when the state, and my department, have seen the efficacy of a combined telework and AWP schedule. While I recognize that other public sector workers may have responsibilities that require more time in-person, I encourage the CSC to see the need for a flexible policy that allows departments the discretion to offer the most effective schedules possible.