



United Labor Unions  
Local 100

## After Inaction by Employers, Local 100 Submits Formal OSHA Complaints About COVID Safety for Arkansas Workers

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For Immediate Release

Little Rock, AR— Today, union leaders and workers went to Occupational Safety and Health Administration offices in Little Rock, Baton Rouge, and Houston, as part of a coordinated action organized by [United Labor Unions Local 100](#). They were there to deliver formal complaints regarding the lack of workplace safety plans and proper protective equipment as the COVID-19 pandemic drags on and effective safety regulations have yet to be put in place.

Representing 28,000 workers at 675 workplaces across Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas, Local 100 says this move is the next in a series of actions to demand that employers take responsibility for keeping their workers healthy. Last week, workers at sites in all three states went to management offices to request copies of their workplace's health and safety plans, with little success. Previous email requests for copies of these plans went largely unanswered.

“At some worksites last week, workers were told that the plan was only available miles away, at the main office,” says Local 100 organizer David Graber. “At others, requests were deflected or outright rejected. This is an obvious violation of the employer's responsibility to provide all workers with an OSHA plan. If workplaces don't even have a copy of their plan onsite, how can we expect them to be taking concrete steps to keep their workers safe?”

In Arkansas, email requests to workplaces for copies of the OSHA plan yielded no response. When workers at the Jefferson County Human Services requested a copy of the OSHA plan last week in person, there was no plan on site and managers were unresponsive. The same was true of requests at the Southeast Arkansas Human Development Center, Arkadelphia Human Development Center, and the Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

As case numbers in Little Rock and surrounding areas remain high, workers say that many employers have not provided them with proper protective equipment or updated information in light of the pandemic. Most of the 8,000 workers in Arkansas represented by the union work in state facilities, providing everything from case management to direct patient care and childcare.

“There were people in our large office who had COVID, and we were never told or given the option to work from home. We don't know, we are just in the dark,” says Donnie Ringo, a social worker at the Jefferson County Department of Human Services. “It was months before we got hand sanitizer, or masks were required in the office.”

“We are going directly to the OSHA offices because the inaction on the part of these employers is unacceptable,” says Toney Orr of Local 100. “Workers are purchasing their own PPE, they're reusing disposable masks, and they have no guidance for how their workplace will deal with an

outbreak. These frontline workers are the ones put in the position of dealing with COVID, and they have the right to know what the plan is.”

Nationally, the lack of regulations and enforcement from OSHA regarding the pandemic has alarmed workers rights groups. The administration has offered guidelines, but no official regulations and very little enforcement, even as over 6.5 million Americans have contracted the virus and over 195,000 have died. Without proper guidelines and enforcement from OSHA, employers are getting away with lax policies that endanger workers and fail to slow the spread of the virus.

Pressure from the union on employers and OSHA will continue until workplaces have concrete plans in place -- including complaints to local Health and Labor Departments, and the possibility of suing OSHA. With no relief from the pandemic in sight, frontline workers will continue to be at risk as long as OSHA fails to uphold its own guidelines.

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*About Local 100: United Labor Unions Local 100 is an independent, community-based labor organization representing low and middle income workers in the South. We represent over 28,000 workers in 675 workplaces in Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas.*