

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (September 2, 2020) - Port Authority of Allegheny County CEO Katharine Kelleman today released a statement regarding the demonstration planned for this afternoon in front of Port Authority's administrative offices:

I want to be absolutely clear: Port Authority unequivocally believes that Black lives matter.

The harassment and injustice that people of color, particularly Black people, experience in America is unacceptable and wrong, and we at Port Authority are doing everything we can to ensure our employees and customers of color are heard, valued and appreciated.

Port Authority's uniform policy isn't directed at Black Lives Matter or any other specific message, group or ideology.

While private businesses have the ability to permit employees to display certain messages while preventing other employees from displaying other messages, federal law prohibits public agencies such as Port Authority from doing the same. If Port Authority allows uniforms to be used as a message board for some political or social protest topics, we must then allow all messages on that topic, including those that could disrupt Port Authority's ability to deliver public transit service in a safe and efficient manner and cause harm to our employees, customers and communities. In legal terms, our policy is viewpoint neutral and simply aims to keep our transit system from being disrupted unnecessarily.

The face coverings of our drivers should not be a barrier to using public transit, and our customers should not be made to feel uncomfortable or unsafe because the personal message on the face covering of our drivers is in conflict with their own beliefs or ideologies, particularly during a time of significant political and social polarization in our country.

Port Authority's uniform policy has prohibited the wearing political or social justice messages since the 1970s. Port Authority recently amended the policy to include face coverings since they are now part of the Port Authority uniform.

In an effort to further address this issue, Port Authority is working with our uniform supplier to design and create Port Authority face coverings that will be required to be worn by all employees while on duty.