Dear Housing and Residence Life,

UVA Resident Staff are among the thousands of frontline workers who hold a central role in the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 at UVA and in Charlottesville. We are currently in a global pandemic due to COVID-19, and we know the University is tasked with creating a meaningful, safe, and equitable college experience for thousands of students. We know that this is no small feat. However, we worry as UVA Resident Staff that all of the restrictions, guidelines, and precautionary measures set forth by the University will fall short of their goal to keep all students, faculty, and staff safe, a reality that several universities have already faced. We ask that the University treat Resident Staff as what they are for this upcoming semester, frontline workers, and that we are provided with the necessary resources to fulfill our role and protect ourselves, our residents, and the community.

We demand that the University prioritize public health and act promptly to resolve the demands being brought forth in this letter by UVA Resident Staff. Our demands propose both necessary protections from COVID-19 for this semester and steps to address concerns about equity, inclusion, and racial violence faced by RAs during training and the academic year under the supervision of Housing and Residence Life. The University will not protect students, faculty, staff, and the greater Charlottesville community if they do not follow through with the needs of their workers on the frontlines, including Resident Staff.

During virtual "O-Week" training, Resident Staff underwent a 2-hour Zoom training on COVID-19 & Residence Halls and received a follow-up email with the same information. A 2-hour training and an email does not get close to providing RAs and SRs with the emotional, psychological, and physical tools as well as detailed knowledge on how to handle situations related to containing the spread of the virus in residence halls. Resident Staff should not only receive information on how to care, protect, and support their residents, but, perhaps more importantly, how to do so for themselves. It is not fair to ask Resident Staff to put themselves at risk when policing residents on COVID-19 guidelines without adequate resources and physical and emotional protection. We acknowledge the work of the Senior Residents who have listened to the concerns of their fellow RAs. We thank them for their advocacy for fair treatment of Resident Staff during their senior staff training and meetings with Professional Staff. We feel there is no other choice but to create this letter to express ourselves and our needs.

HRL Professional Staff often states that those in the Resident Staff program are people first, then students, then Resident Staff. If this is true, Housing and Residence life must first treat its staff with empathy, dignity, and support as human beings and students before pushing the many requirements and duties expected of us as Resident Staff during this unprecedented time, especially when the only extra compensation is 20 extra meals on our University meal plan. Our proposed changes must be implemented before the mass arrival of first year residents into dorms the first week of September. The University of Virginia must act upon the following demands for the safety of all members of our residential communities and beyond. We stand in solidarity with the United Campus Workers of Virginia at UVA and ask that the University meet their demands as well. We expect a response from the University and Housing and Residence Life no later than Tuesday, September 1st, 2020.

COVID-19 & Safety Related Demands

- 1. **Financial Compensation & Hazard Pay:** The University and Housing & Residence Life must acknowledge that Resident Staff are frontline workers in the midst of a global pandemic. HRL must provide hazard pay compensation for working during a pandemic. RAs and SRs are risking their health in order to ensure that HRL policies are adhered to.
 - a. As of August 24, UNC-Chapel Hill recorded <u>238 confirmed cases</u> in residence halls, with seven total clusters. The University recognizes this elevated risk through the <u>COVID-19</u> <u>Addendum</u> to the Undergraduate Terms & Conditions of Housing. The addendum states that "living in University housing could increase the risk of contracting any contagious illness simply due to the dense populations in the residence halls." The regular direct contact with residents inherent in Resident Advisors' positions magnifies these risks further.
 - b. Provide us, all HRL employees who are working directly with residents with a stipend of \$2,226.67 per semester. This is one-third of our current housing remuneration.
 - c. Provide residents and Resident Staff with discounted prices to laundry services. Individuals may not have sufficient funds to do their laundry weekly despite pressure to keep themselves and their areas clean due to COVID-19.
- 2. Adequate Personal Protective Equipment & Risk Reduction: The risks associated with our jobs as RAs and SRs have increased with the possibility of COVID-19 in the dorms. RAs and SRs will constantly put themselves at risk for On-Call and Coverage Shifts, entering all bathrooms of a residence hall. Given that we are frontline essential staff interacting with students, whether that be for standard violations or COVID-19 policies, Resident Staff must receive additional PPE, including extra masks, face shields, gloves, and disinfecting wipes. This PPE needs to be available prior to September 3rd for first year dorms and August 31st for upperclassmen dorms.
 - a. Additional masks, gloves, and face shields are imperative to maintaining a healthy community environment on our floors. RAs need to be informed about the specific procedure that HRL is planning to take.
 - b. Clarification as of 8/30/2020: Resident Staff and Residents all receive the same PPE pack: two masks, two hand sanitizers, and a touchtool. However, Resident Staff are tasked with entering all hall bathrooms for their duties, which puts them at a higher risk. We second that these asks also be acknowledged for Facilities Management as they enter restrooms for cleaning and require extra PPE.
- 3. **Policing & COVID-19 Guidelines:** We demand that HRL communicate clearly and directly to students prior to their arrival the expectations of students in dorms, including but not limited to, the no guest policy, mask wearing at all times outside of the room, and gathering size. We demand that Professional Staff of HRL acknowledge that Resident Staff cannot constantly police residents to maintain 6 ft. of social distancing in dorms and wear masks in all dorm areas but their rooms. Constantly needing to be hyper vigilant in our halls is traumatizing and detrimental to the mental and physical stability of RAs and SRs.
 - a. If UVA establishes a culture of actively policing and shaming students we run the risk of:

- i. Students exhibiting symptoms of COVID and not reaching out to the proper services in fear of retribution.
- ii. Students failing to share information about the spread of the virus to fellow residents and Resident Staff.
- iii. Students feeling even more hesitant to come to Resident Staff about concerns not related to COVID.
- iv. Marginalized students feeling over policed given the fact that <u>Black and Asian</u> students are <u>disproportionately</u> policed.
- 4. **Food Security, Meal Plans, & Kitchens:** Provide HRL members with 318 meals for the fall of 2020 and 378 meals for the spring of 2021, ensuring that all three meals of the day are secure.
 - a. Currently, public kitchens are closed, limiting Resident Staff's ability to cook healthy meals and comply with electrical appliance policies stated by HRL. Shifting a huge amount of responsibility onto Resident Staff without providing extra compensation beyond an extra 20 meals is unjust.
 - b. We recognize this is a time of collective sacrifice, but if RAs are not to be considered employees of the University and instead students first, we must be given the resources to be safe and healthy. A rice cooker, microwave, tea kettle, and fridge do not compensate for an entire kitchen. Furthermore, we cannot assume that all Resident Advisors have access to the stated appliances.
 - c. The previous suggestion made by HRL to ask SR's for access to their kitchens not only endangers both SR's and RA's but also asks SRs to go beyond their job description.
 - d. Many returning staff members and residents are returning due to the need of immediate access to stable shelter, internet access, food, and safety. Additionally, Resident Staff completed two weeks of online training with quizzes without meals or housing. An increased meal plan beyond the 20 extra meals will compensate for these reasons and the extra food needed due to the closure of kitchens.
- 5. **RA Housing Stability:** Ensure that if we are sent home due to COVID-19 for the fall semester, RA's receive financial compensation from their Dining and Housing agreement.
 - b. All members of Resident Staff joined out of a desire to guide and support residents. Because of this, many RAs continued to support residents after we had to vacate Grounds, despite RAs losing their housing and dining contract. This semester, if expected to continue to serve as a primary contact in full capacity as an RA for residents if the University moves fully online, there would need to be monetary compensation for those services. Additionally, ACCESS UVA grants must not be reduced if students are evicted against their will.
 - c. While HRL may say that we are released from our role if we move online, many first years will still need support from us as Resident Advisors.
 - d. The expectation that our residents will stop viewing us as their RAs is unrealistic because of the bond and trust we will have formed during the time with our residents.
- 6. **Financial Aid:** As RAs at the University, we are given housing and meal plan scholarships that transcribe as outside scholarships on our financial aid package. The grants and work-study that RAs qualify for are often reduced or eliminated entirely from our packages. If these scholarships substitute as our "form of payment" for services rendered as RAs, then the scholarships should

not reduce or eliminate any previous material on our financial aid packages as students. This reality greatly impacts students of low-income backgrounds, and a change in this policy would add a crucial layer of diversity to the program.

Resident Staff has the right to know if we are able to stay on grounds to ensure the stability of our housing and those of our residents. HRL must be transparent about policies granted all classes move online during the Fall semester. So far, the disclosure of COVID-related policies has been sporadic, and much of the information we need regarding how we'll communicate with our residents as well as specific procedures have been pushed off down to the wire very close to our return to Grounds. While we acknowledge the need for flexibility in uncertain times, sacrificing clarity and transparency in our rush to reopen has real consequences for us and our residents' safety.

Equity, Inclusion, & Safety Related Demands

- 1. **RA Representation as Student Employees**: Ensure that Resident Staff are represented in UVA's HR system as student employees of the University, and recieve any possible benefits. HR representation would protect RAs with set processes of grievance resolution, protection against retaliation, and employee relations, which are currently not codified within HRL.
 - a. Specifically, provide whistleblower protections for non-Co-Chair Resident Staff who share information to the public or critique Housing and Residence Life.
 - i. There should not be a blanket restriction on RA's publicly speaking about their roles.
 - ii. As students, RAs have a first amendment right to be able to express grievances involving HRL without fear of retaliation because of the grey area in regards to RAs not speaking on behalf of HRL. This University cannot say it believes in student self-governance if it does so only until students speak out against the institutions within it.
- 2. **Third-Party Anti-Racist Consultant:** Hire an outside 3rd party non-student consulting group trained in anti-racist facilitation to conduct a full external review of UVA Housing & Residence Life
- 3. **Professional Staff Liaison:** Hire a non-student individual to serve as a Professional Staff Liaison between RA's and Professional Staff to create transparent communication and represent RA's interests to create concrete change, because enough "conversations" on the problems of inequity within HRL have been had.
- 4. **Co-Chair Accountability:** Create a system wherein Resident Staff can participate in a democratic process in selecting co-chairs for the program, such as voting, to ensure that someone who really represents us as a program and voices our concerns is in that position of power.

Conclusion

As we wrote this letter, we circled around two crucial concerns. The first is how we can care for our residents and ourselves. Many residents and RAs are returning due to the need of immediate access to stable shelter, internet access, food, and safety. We wrote this letter because we see that HRL has not considered the needs of all students in order to ensure the safest return to us and the community. The second topic we circled around was protection. We, as RA's at the University of Virginia, are constantly trying to navigate the gray area of sharing concerns that are often unaddressed without running the risk of removal or penalties from HRL. We are choosing the route of anonymity due to the blanket restrictions surrounding media coverage.

Sincerely,

University of Virginia Resident Staff

Follow this link to sign on: Contact information for Organization Support/Signature

With the support of

Organizations:

Student Council

UCW-VA (United Campus Workers of Virginia)

Ethiopian Eritrean Student Association

Take Back The Night

Virginia Student Power Network

undocUVA

IMP Society

ART (Asians Revolutionizing Together) - Collective

Arab Students Organization

OYFA (The Organization of Young Filipino Americans)

The Order

CORE (Culture of Respect Educators)

Third Year Council (TYC)

Student Hip Hop Organization

Asian Student Union

Nepali Student Association

Individual Signatures:

Jacquelyn Kim, Student

Jedidiah Park, Student

Abel Liu, Student

Crystal Jing Luo, Student

Emmy Monaghan, Student

Emily Lockwood, Student

Nettie Webb, Residential Staffer

Kelley Long, Student

Monica Sebastian, UVA Alumna

Revati Joshi, Student

Luca Beale, Graduate Student

Sarandon Elliott, Student

Albert Kwon, Student

Rachel Smilan-Goldstein, Student

Felipe Montini, Student

Sam Hedrick, Student

Andrew Craver, Student

Elizabeth Duncan, Student

Avery Gagne, Residential Staffer

Hannah Han, Student

Vaheed Talebian, Residential Staffer

Abena Appiah-Ofori, Student

Shivani Mullapudi, Student

Juan Zazueta, Student

Isabelle Mayor-Mora, Student

Veronica Sirotic, UVA Alum (% 2020) + Take Back the Night CIO Rep

Nina Richards, Former RA

Jordan Sicklick, Residential Staffer

Jontel Armstead, Student

Amanda Peñalo, Student

Matt Peterson, Student

Aryana Jiménez Senzano, Student

Monica Norton, Student

Ashton Landes, Student

Myka Greene, Student

Hannah Russell-Hunter, Student

Ana Hidalgo, Alumni

Jessica Meyers, Student

Roxie Mosavian, Student

Lucas Critzer, Student

Kathryn Laughon, Faculty - Associate Professor of Nursing

Joel Thomas, Student

Aerin Fortes, Student

Morgan Foster, Student

Caroline Caruso, Student

Catherine Farnsler, Alum

Jayla Hart, Residential Staffer

Zulfiqar Mohamedshah, Alum + Former Staffer

Kristin Myers, Student + Former Staffer

John Edwin Mason, Faculty - Department of History

Reagan Brill, Residential Staffer

Matthew Gillikin, UVA Health Employee + Charlottesville Resident

Stephen Marrone, Student

Caleb Paul Mechem, UVA Staff

Ibtisaam Amin, Alumna (% 2020)

Michael Bacon, Student

Catherine Addington, Student - PhD Candidate

Mariam Syed, Residential Staffer - SR of Woody Cauthen

Ilyas Saltani, Residential Staffer

XYZ, Student

Akosua Odei, Residential Staffer

Victoria Centineo, Residential Staffer

Bridget Thornberry, Residential Staffer

Alexandra Vien, Student

Malcolm Huguenin, Residential Staffer

Alexander Pradhan, Residential Staffer

Caro Campos, Residential Staffer

Camryn Forbes, Student

Chi Chan, Alum + Former 3-Year Staffer

Starr Johnson, Student

Andrea Mercedes, Student

XYZ, Residential Staffer

Zainab Aziz, Student

Jacob Baker, Student

XYZ, Residential Staffer

Briana Doby, Residential Staffer

Caden Schuessler, Student

Peyton Brooks, Fourth Year Residential Staffer

Walter Heinecke, Faculty - Associate Professor in Education

Ben Gustafson, Residential Staffer

Jasmine Mao, Student

Brad Pasanek, Faculty - Associate Professor in English

Shreya Chappidi, Residential Staffer

Dre Dilao, Student

Ellen Yates, Student + Former Member of Resident Staff

Amanda Visconti, University Staff

M.A.M, Student

Zack Landsman, Student

Katie Kirk, Student + Former Member of Resident Staff

Sarah Pharr, Student

John Le, Residential Staffer

Erin Cary, Student

Anna Linehan, Student

Donavon Lea, Student

Iam McClain, Student

Amanda Roberts, Residential Staffer

Isabelle Edwards, Student

Samira Lam, Student

Sarah Kim, Student

Soleil Reed, Alum + Former 3-Year Staffer

Christine Hwang, Residential Staffer

Emma Damazo, Student

Hiam Baidas, Residential Staffer

Lauren Xue, Student

Adrian Mamaril, Student

Mitchell Popielec, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff

Caroline Li, Residential Staffer

Keiara Price, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff

Taamson Joshua, Residential Staffer - SR of Lile-Maupin

Sadie Randall, Student

Sara Dunklee, Residential Staffer

Maya Ramani, Residential Staffer

Holly Sims, Residential Staffer

Lauren Prince, Student

Elizabeth Chung, Student

Darynha Gnep, Student

Ahmed Eitta, Residential Staffer

Andrew Prince, Student

Hannah Feder, Student

Lauren Schmidt, Student

Kavya Ravikanti, Alum

Sydney Bowden, Residential Staffer

XYZ, Residential Staffer

Danielle Ashbahian, Student

Bethany Ludica, Student

Vaishnavi Karimpuzha, Residential Staffer

Emily Riggleman, Student

Uchenna Oguagha, Residential Staffer

Lauren Considine, Residential Staffer

Mira Manalastas, Student

Eliza Woodfin, Student

Casey Breneman, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff

Abigail LeGear, Residential Staffer

Nyasia Harris, Student

Mehdy, Residential Staffer

Hannah Maupin, Residential Staffer

Sarah Mackey, Student

Alex Levin, Alum, Former 3-year staffer and 2-year Senior Resident

Andrea Khattabi, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff

Arnaldo Sandoval-Guerrero, Student

Steven Villereal, Faculty

Eliza Woodfin, Student

Leona Gaither, Residential Staffer

Folasayo Obajuluwa, Student

Amelia Lindsey, Student

Logan Murtha, Residential Staffer

Danielle Ashbahian, Student

Joshua Elias Palmer, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff

Anushey Ahmed, Student

Abbie Morgan, Student

Caroline Noel, Student

Caden Schuessler, Student

Blair Wilner, Student

Kimberly Maravilla, Alum

Dheeraj Ram, Residential Staffer

Shawn Podowski, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff

Mary Garner McGehee, Alum & IRC SR 2018-19

Julija Martin, Student

Nia Williams, Student

Neeka Samimi, Student

Tatiyahna Blakely, Former a Member of Resident Staff

Benjamin Borenstein, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff

Annie Williams, Former Member of Resident Staff

Aneesha Goodala, Student

XYZ, Residential Staffer

Smritee Thapa, Residential Staffer

Jessie Bryant, Concerned Individual

Caitlin Nguyen, Student

Mohneet Kaur, Student

Hiam Baidas, Residential Staffer

Bethany Iudica, Student

Christopher O'Neill, Student

Paola Covarrubias, Student

Cameron Bertron, Student

John Barton, Faculty

Abreale Hopkins, Student

Kaylin Belcher, Student

Lauren Parker, Residential Staffer

Janie Cai, Student

Jessica Flester, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff

Edward Carter, Student

Ryan Alcorn, Student

Anisa Mohamed, Residential Staffer

Kate Bellows, Former Member of Resident Staff

Sophia Liao, Student

Ricardo Vallejo, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff

Zach Marhanka, Student

Rachael Tomlinson, Student

Brianna Lehman, Residential Staffer

Saqib Rizvi, Residential Staffer

Foster Garrett, Student

Amanda Benedict, Former Member of Resident Staff

Levi Schult, Student

Draper Smith, Charlottesville Community Member

Gabby Ringer, Student

Aaria Malhotra, Residential Staffer

Grace Medrano, Student

Kris Kokoneshi, Residential Staffer

Wahaj, Residential Staffer

Connor Kenaston, Student

Hannah Hiscott, Student

Omeed Faegh, Residential Staffer

Austin Rapkins, Student + Former Member of Resident Staff

Colin Buyck, Residential Staffer

Rosa Hamilton, Graduate Student

Katie Kenny, Student

Anna Winter, Student

Ja'Mel Reed, Student

Ester Rekhelman, Student

Jordan Bridges, Alum

JaLynn Smith, Residential Staffer

Maxine DeVeaux, Student

Rita Anane-Wae, Student

Omega Ilijevich, Student

Jacob W, Student

Sukriti Thapa, Alum

Thien-Kim Dinh, Student

Kaitlyn Diaz, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff

Logan Dickinson, Alum + Former Member of Resident Staff

Eva Paleo, Student

Joe Wei, Student

Calathea Pacifica, Student

Stephanie Lawton, Student

Bridget Thornberry, Residential Staffer

Veena Ramesh, Student

Tryston Raecke, Student

Denzel Mitchell, Residential Staffer

Jackson Kennedy, Student

Lou'ay Hussein, Student

Samira Aden, Student

Saeed Razavi, Student

Akosua Odei, Residential Staffer

Laura Boyle, Student

Mia Gualtieri, Student

Sarah Stegner, Student

Danielle Heckert, Student + Former Staffer

Isabelle Mayor-Mora, Student

Anna Cuddeback, Residential Staffer

Aneesha Goodala, Student

Abreale Hopkins, Student

Tatiana Kennedy, Student

Aline Dolinh, Alum

Leah Baetcke, Student

Miles Woollacott, Student

Merly Konathapally, Residential Staffer

Nayana Painumkal, Residential Staffer

Emma Ellsworth, Student

Zainab Jaffa, Student

Jessica Terry, Residential Staffer

Yaa Awusi-Sarkodie, Residential Staffer

Conrad Furlich, Student

Revati Joshi, Student

Subani Adhikari, Student

Katie Kenny, Student

Ellie Prober, Student

Joshua Dano, Student

XYZ, Residential Staffer

Suraj Patel, CIO Representative

Fawzia Tahsin, Student

Julia Lain, Student

Rachel Greif, Student

Jackson Samples, Alum

Lyla Ward, Student

Eva Surovell, Student

Maddie Ward, Alum

Laura Hahn,

Parent or Guardian of Student/Resident Staffer

Stephen Ward, Parent of Forth-Year Off-Grounds Student

Megan Talarek, Student

Andrew Prince, Student

Cameron Bertron, Student

Arya Royal, Student

Isabelle Talicuran, Student

Camille Kielbasa, Student

Mary Katherine Terrell, Student