



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Monica R. Martinez

## Increased Protections to Include All Essential Workers during COVID-19 Crisis Under the 'Unsung Heroes Act' of 2020

MONICA R. MARTINEZ March 26, 2020

| ISSUE: COVID-19, FIRST RESPONDERS, ESSENTIAL WORKERS, HEALTH CARE, SICK LEAVE



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR MONICA R. MARTINEZ INCREASES PROTECTIONS TO INCLUDE ALL ESSENTIAL WORKERS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS UNDER THE 'UNSUNG HEROES ACT' OF 2020

MARCH 26, 2020

(PATCHOGUE, NY): "This pandemic has shown our state the thousands of Unsung Heroes who have been deemed essential personnel and have been serving the public on a daily basis to ensure our residents can continue to live their everyday lives. I have introduced bill S.8117, the Unsung Heroes Act of 2020 which will allow for guaranteed sick leave and job protection to those individuals deemed essential employees who are stricken with COVID-19 as well as death benefits to the family if an individual is to succumb to the virus. I, along with other members of the Long Island delegation, will be seeking a 50% cost sharing arrangement with the State for employers to cover the cost of medical care and time off to help ease the burden on businesses and local municipalities," said Senator Monica R. Martinez

The Long Island Delegation is committed to ensuring the health and well-being of all New Yorkers and as such, is advocating for the passage of S.8117 to protect the lives of those individuals who are on the frontline of the COVID-19 crisis. A letter has been delivered to Governor Cuomo:

March 24, 2020

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo

State Capitol

Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We write to you today regarding the hard work by thousands of essential employees across New York State. As stated in your Executive Order, essential businesses are "any business providing products or services that are required to maintain the health, welfare and safety of the citizens of New York State." The essential employee designation covers everyone from

the nurse at a hospital, to the social worker at Child Protective Services to individuals who are stocking grocery store shelves. It is clear that these jobs are necessary in order to keep New York functioning.

These individuals working on the frontlines are inherently necessary to ensure the wellbeing of others, regardless of the risk to themselves and their loved ones. Many employees of these essential businesses and entities have no choice but to go to work as they cannot work from home.

Given the rate of infection and the ever rising number of infected individuals, many essential employees are afraid to go to work. The people of the State of New York need to be assured they will receive workers compensation if they become sick as a result of performing an essential duty or their family will receive death benefits as a result of infection for COVID-19.

In the coming week, Senator Martinez will be introducing legislation to ensure Workers Compensation law protects all essential employees who are bravely putting their lives at risk to help others. New York State must establish a presumption clause that COVID-19 infection to an essential employee is a result of their in-person job duties.

Furthermore, we believe 50 percent of the cost of the medical care and time off due to such illness should be covered by the State. A cost sharing arrangement such as this will ensure businesses and local municipalities will not have to bear the full cost of this pandemic. We strongly urge the support of such a proposal.

Sincerely,

Senator Monica R. Martinez

Senator John E. Brooks

Senator James F. Gaughran

Senator Todd Kaminsky

Senator Anna M. Kaplan

Senator Kevin Thomas

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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## 2019-S8117

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to a presumption regarding impairment of health caused by COVID-19 and to use of sick leave

March 23, 2020

In Senate Committee **Local Government**

Sponsored by **Monica R. Martinez**

Do you support this bill?