



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Serrano and Joyner Bill Requiring Cultural Diversity in Contact Tracing Passes New York State Legislature

JOSE M. SERRANO May 27, 2020



(Albany, NY) – The New York State Senate and Assembly today passed legislation sponsored by Senator José M. Serrano (D - Manhattan/Bronx, 29th SD) and Assembly Member Latoya Joyner (D – Bronx, 77th AD) requiring language and cultural representation among new contact tracers hired during the next phase of battling the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill ([S8362](#)) requires that New York City agencies and New York City Health + Hospitals prioritize recruiting representative residents as contact tracers as a means to distribute employment opportunity equitably and provide efficient and culturally competent virus control services

to New York's diverse communities.

“Contact tracers are reaching out to New Yorkers to alert them of their potential COVID-19 exposure, but they also serve as a point of connection by discussing isolation options and referring additional wellness services for those in quarantine,” said **Senator José M. Serrano**.

“As many of our diverse neighborhoods have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, it is vitally important that the people who interact with our residents are familiar with the community and prioritize language and cultural literacy to foster familiarity and trust moving forward. This cultural competency has proven beneficial results and can lead to better health outcomes.”

“Contact tracing is about being innovative and connecting with residents on a personal level as we fight against this ongoing public health pandemic,” said **Assemblywoman Latoya Joyner**.

“New York's diversity has long been our greatest strength in overcoming challenges and, if we truly embrace our diversity, I am confident it will be so once again.”

In order to minimize population exposure and alert those who should be isolated, New York will be relying on contact tracers to obtain information regarding people and places visited from individuals who may have been exposed to COVID-19. Familiarity with varied languages and cultural practices plays an important role in generating the trust necessary to carry out the work of contact tracing.

Passed as part of a package of COVID-19 bills, the measure now awaits the Governor's signature.