



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

Buffalo News: NY HERO Act Would Help Ensure Workplace Safety (Op-Ed)

MICHAEL GIANARIS & KARINES REYES February 19, 2021

| ISSUE: [NY HERO ACT](#), [COVID-19](#), [CORONAVIRUS](#), [ESSENTIAL WORKERS](#), [WORKPLACE SAFETY](#)



This first appeared in the Buffalo News on February 20, 2021. Michael Gianaris serves as State Senate Deputy Majority Leader and represents Queens. Karines Reyes represents the Bronx in the State Assembly. They are the authors of the NY HERO Act.

The covid-19 pandemic has meant dramatic changes in all of our lives - especially in the workplace. For many, this pandemic meant lost jobs and income. Some have been privileged to transition to working from home while, for others, the workplace continued to require in-person attendance. These frontline workers have kept our communities running for months,

sometimes at the expense of their own wellbeing.

We must reimagine workplace safety. This will not happen by government edict or through benevolent employers. Every New Yorker will be called on to be a hero in their own workplace using the best safety practices. That is why we introduced the New York Health and Essential Rights Order Act –the New York HERO Act – to give everyone the opportunity for a safe return to work.

Our legislation creates pandemic safety plans for all employers to follow and empowers workers to organize their workplaces, fostering an environment of safety and mutual respect. The state Health and Labor departments will create standards for airborne infectious disease exposure and individual employers would create workplace safety committees – with non-management employees being the majority. The act protects workers against retaliation for exercising their rights and reporting violations.

The New York HERO Act is about more than creating a process. It is about empowering people – our neighbors, friends, and families – to lead. People like Daniel, a sanitation worker from the Bronx. The father of a daughter with asthma, his employer required him to supply his own PPE and fired him when he used vacation days to quarantine with his family, he was fired. Or Beatriz, an immigrant in Queens, who was fired from her job at a laundry center because she was diagnosed with covid-19 and could no longer come to work. Thousands of New Yorkers like Daniel and Beatriz kept us running this past year and deserve safe, healthy workplaces without fear and a voice in making that happen.

We have lost over 40,000 New Yorkers to covid-19 – a heartbreaking tragedy. We have also seen widespread economic suffering, which has led some well-meaning people to return to work prematurely to provide for their families. The consequences have been terrible as workplace transmission is among the top sources of community spread. We must protect

people from airborne diseases like covid-19 while giving up employees the security of knowing they can return to their workplaces safely.

Change is now a constant. As we begin 2021, the meaningful change we need for essential workers is the NY HERO Act, safeguarding workplaces for our fellow New Yorkers.

This first ran in the [Buffalo News](#); read it [here](#).

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Prevents occupational exposure to an airborne infectious disease

January 06, 2021

Senate Floor Calendar

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