



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

LETTER: Senator Akshar calls on DOH to end high-stakes game of chicken with hospitals, nursing homes and health care workers.

FRED AKSHAR September 7, 2021

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC. COVID-19. VACCINATIONS**

On Tuesday, Senator Fred Akshar sent a letter to the Governor and the NYS Department of Health regarding the calls and emails his office received from countless constituents in the healthcare field facing the choice of losing their jobs or taking the COVID-19 vaccine against their deeply-held personal and religious objections.

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"I'm fully vaccinated and wholeheartedly support the New York State Department of Health's mission to protect public health and stop the spread of this deadly virus, but taking the vaccine should remain a personal choice and I think government has grossly underestimated how many people are willing to walk away from their careers due to this blanket deadline on September 27th," said Senator Fred Akshar. "This high-stakes game of chicken is putting our hospitals, nursing homes and long-term care facilities, as well as the patients they serve, in a very perilous position."

You can read the [full letter here](#) and the text is included below.

Dr. Howard Zucker, Commissioner

New York State Department of Health

Corning Tower, Empire State Plaza

Albany, New York 12237

Dear Commissioner Zucker:

Over the last week or so, I've heard from countless constituents in the healthcare field who are facing the impossible choice of losing their jobs or taking the COVID-19 vaccine against their deeply-held personal and religious objections.

I'm fully vaccinated and wholeheartedly support the New York State Department of Health's mission to protect public health and stop the spread of this deadly virus, but taking the vaccine should be a personal choice and I think you're grossly underestimating how many people are willing to walk away from their careers on September 27th.

United Health Services President/CEO John Carrigg tells me that 20% of his staff, amounting to approximately 1,000 employees, remain unvaccinated. If UHS has to terminate even 5% of these essential workers due to the COVID-19 vaccine mandate, they'll be forced to reduce services and shut down one of their three psychiatric inpatient units, which are currently operating at full capacity.

Coronavirus outbreaks are currently spreading exponentially in the Southern Tier and across the great State of New York, threatening to overwhelm our already strained healthcare systems. Who's going to care for these patients when we lose 20% of our healthcare workforce? What are your contingency plans in the event of a major staffing crisis? Let me assure you, we have no backup labor pool to draw from, Commissioner.

This high-stakes game of chicken you're playing is putting our hospitals, nursing homes and long-term care facilities, as well as the patients they serve, in a very perilous position.

I'm calling on NYS Department of Health to thwart this massive employee exodus by giving these employers a reasonable and practical testing alternative for unvaccinated workers.

Thank you for your time, consideration and swift action here.

Best wishes,

Frederick J. Akshar II

New York State Senator