

2023-J542

Senate Resolution No. 542

BY: Senator RAMOS

COMMEMORATING the 112th Anniversary of the
Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire on March 25, 2023

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to commemorate the 112th Anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, which took the lives of 146 garment workers, on March 25, 1911; and

WHEREAS, It is also incumbent upon this Legislative Body, as we commemorate this anniversary, to acknowledge the continued efforts of Workers United/SEIU (formerly the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union) in empowering and protecting workers across the country; and

WHEREAS, Each year, Workers United/SEIU, together with the New York City Fire Department and the United Federation of Teachers, commemorates the anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire at the original site of the tragedy with a wreath, speeches and the laying of 146 flowers in honor of the fire victims; members of Ladder Company 20, the first to respond to the fire, toll their bell and raise their ladder to the sixth floor; and

WHEREAS, The majority of the fire's victims were Jewish and Italian immigrants, many of them young women, who might otherwise have survived this tragedy had the factory's managers not locked the doors to the stairwells so as to prevent theft and early departure; there was almost no water that the workers trapped on the 8th, 9th, and 10th floors could

use to douse the rapidly spreading flames; doors that were not locked opened the wrong way, leaving workers with no option for escape; meanwhile the factory's owners were in the factory that same day with their children, and were able to find their way to safety by escaping to the building's rooftop; and

WHEREAS, Since the doors to the stairwells were locked, dozens of panicked factory employees attempted to escape via the building's structurally compromised fire escape only for it to collapse onto the concrete eight stories below; after the fire escape collapsed and the stairways became inaccessible because of the smoke and heat, employees were trapped in the building with no means of escape except by jumping; and

WHEREAS, Only three weeks prior to the fire, a group of property owners had met to oppose the fire department's calls for the installation of indoor sprinklers; the fire department's ladders were not tall enough to reach beyond the sixth and seventh floors, leaving the workers on the 8th, 9th, and 10th stranded; and

WHEREAS, The deplorable working conditions in New York City's garment industry were well-known at the time and, in 1909, industry leaders were met with a massive strike known as the Uprising of the 20,000 led by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in which workers demanded higher wages, safer working conditions, and better hours; this strike precipitated the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire by just a year; and

WHEREAS, Recent research has determined the names and ages of the handful of previously unidentified victims; and

WHEREAS, The complete list now includes: Lizzie Adler (24 years

old), Anna Altman (16), Annina Ardito (25), Rose Bassino (31, sister of Catherine Giannattasio), Vincenza Benanti (22), Yetta Berger (18), Essie Bernstein (19), Jacob Bernstein (38), Morris Bernstein (19), Gussie Bierman (22), Vincenza Biliota (16), Abraham Binowitz (30), Rosie Brenman (23, sister of Sarah Brenman), Sarah Brenman (17), Ida Brodsky (15), Sarah Brodsky (21), Ada Brooks (18), Laura Brunetti (17), Josephine Cammarata (17), Francesca Caputo (17), Josephine Carlisi (31), Albina Caruso (20), Annie Ciminello (36), Rosina Cirrito (18), Anna Cohen (25), Annie Colletti (30), Sarah Cooper (16), Michelina Cordiano (25), Bessie Dashefsky (25), Josie Del Castillo (21), Clara Dockman (19), Kalman Donick (24), Celia Eisenberg (17), Dora Evans (18), Rebecca Feibisch (20), Yetta Fichtenholtz (18), Daisy Lopez Fitze (26), Mary Floresta (26), Max Florin (23), Jennie Franco (16), Rose Friedman (18), Molly Gerstein (17), Catherine Giannattasio (22, sister of Rose Bassino), Celia Gitlin (17), Esther Goldstein (20), Lena Goldstein (22, sister of Mary Goldstein), Mary Goldstein (18), Yetta Goldstein (20), Rosie Grasso (16), Bertha Greb (25), Diana Gerjuoy (18), Rachel Grossman (18), Mary Herman (40), Esther Hochfeld (21), Fannie Hollander (18), Pauline Horowitz (19), Ida Jukofsky (19), Ida Kanowitz (18), Tessie Kaplan (18), Beckie Kessler (19), Jacob Klein (23), Beckie Koppelman (16), Bertha Kula (19), Tillie Kupferschmidt (16), Benjamin Kurtz (19), Annie L'Abbate (16), Fannie Lansner (21), Maria Giuseppa Lauletti (33, sister of Isabella Tortorelli), Jennie Lederman (21), Max Lehrer (18, brother of Sam Lehrer), Sam Lehrer (19), Kate Leone (14), Mary Leventhal (22), Jennie Levin (19), Pauline Levine (19), Nettie Liebowitz (23), Rose Liermark (19), Bettina Maiale (18, sister of Frances Maiale), Frances Maiale (21), Caterina Maltese (39, mother of Lucia and Rosaria Maltese), Lucia Maltese (20), Rosaria Maltese (14), Maria Manaria (27), Rose Mankofsky (22), Rose Mehl (15), Yetta Meyers (19), Gaetana Midolo (16), Annie Miller (16), Beckie Neubauer (19), Annie Nicholas (18), Michelina Nicolosi (21), Sadie Nussbaum (18), Julia Oberstein (19), Rose Oringer (19), Beckie Ostrovsky (20), Annie Pack (18), Provindenza Panno

(43), Antonietta Pasqualicchio (16), Ida Pearl (20), Jennie Pildescu (18), Vincenza Pinelli (30), Emilia Prato (21), Concetta Prestifilippo (22), Beckie Reines (18), Fannie Rosen (21), Israel Rosen (17, son of Julia Rosen), Julia Rosen (35), Louis Rosen (33), Yetta Rosenbaum (22), Jennie Rosenberg (21), Gussie Rosenfeld (22), Nettie Rosenthal (21), Emma Rothstein (22), Theodore Rotner (22), Sarah Sabasowitz (17), Santina Salemi (24), Sarafina Saracino (25, sister of Teresina Saracino), Teresina Saracino (20), Gussie Schiffman (18), Theresa Schmidt (32), Ethel Schneider (20), Violet Schochet (21), Golda Schpunt (19), Margaret Schwartz (24), Jacob Seltzer (33), Rosie Shapiro (17), Ben Sklover (25), Rose Sorkin (18), Annie Starr (30), Jennie Stein (18), Jennie Stellino (16), Jennie Stiglitz (22), Sam Taback (20), Clotilde Terranova (22), Isabella Tortorelli (17), Meyer Utal (23), Catherine Uzzo (22), Frieda Velakofsky (20), Bessie Viviano (15), Rosie Weiner (19), Sarah Weintraub (17), Tessie Weisner (21), Dora Welfowitz (21), Bertha Wendorff (18), Joseph Wilson (22) and Sonia Wisotsky (17); and

WHEREAS, Subsequent to this devastating, preventable tragedy, the labor movement sprung to action and the New York State Legislature formed the Factory Investigating Commission to study and make recommendations on working conditions; the Factory Investigating Commission's reports and findings led to 38 new labor laws in New York

State strengthening worker protections with measures that required stronger fire safety efforts, more effective factory ventilation, safe operation of elevators, and improved machine guarding and sanitation measures; and

WHEREAS, The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire reinvigorated a labor movement that would give American workers access to rights we must never take for granted, including the nationwide adoption of the 40-hour work week and the weekend in 1940, the passage of the Social Security Act in

1935, and the right to organize a union and negotiate in good faith under the Wagner Act in 1935; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative at a time when our Federal Government continues to demonize and persecute immigrants that we honor our state's history of welcoming immigrants, that we cherish the fact that this country was built by immigrants, and that we re-commit to continuing that legacy by standing up for immigrants today; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 112th Anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, and to acknowledge the efforts of Workers United/SEIU, Governor Kathy Hochul, Commissioner of Labor Roberta Reardon, and the New York State Legislature; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Workers United/SEIU; Clarissa M. Rodriguez, Chair of the New York State Workers' Compensation Board; Daniel A. Nigro, New York City Fire Commissioner; Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Memorial Society; Serphin R. Maltese; New York State Commissioner of Labor Roberta Reardon; and the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition.