



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mark Walczyk

SENATOR WALCZYK RESPONDS TO NYS DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL SERVICE ON HEALTH INSURANCE CANCELLATIONS FOR CORRECTIONS OFFICERS

MARK WALCZYK July 18, 2025

In light of the recent responses from the New York State Department of Civil Service regarding the cancellation of health insurance for Corrections Officers (COs), Senator Mark Walczyk is raising serious concerns about the lack of accountability and transparency in Albany. The responses highlight a troubling trend in how the state values its frontline workers, especially following the February strike, where thousands of COs walked out to demand safer working conditions.

The cancellation of health insurance for COs—who risk their lives daily and took a stand for improved safety—occurs against a backdrop of alarming detachment from the realities these workers face. Senator Walczyk expressed concern over the shocking revelation that many COs discovered their health insurance had been abruptly revoked months after returning to work. Families learned of this devastating loss while seeking medical treatment, being turned away at doctors' offices due to the unexpected cancellation of coverage. “I am amazed at how easy it is for those who advocate for universal healthcare to strip away coverage from individuals they disagree with, and even more amazed that they documented it,” said Senator Walczyk.

In response to these injustices, Senator Walczyk reached out to Commissioner Daniel Martuscello seeking clarity on the process behind the cancellations, particularly regarding COBRA coverage denial. The Department's assertion that striking employees were marked as AWOL and classified the strike as "gross misconduct" provided a flimsy rationale for denying COBRA coverage,

effectively leaving these essential workers and their families without a safety net. “It's particularly disheartening to see Governor Hochul taking health insurance away from kids of Corrections Officers. Real motherly,” he added, pointing out the contradiction between the Governor's image as “New York's Mom Governor” and her actions.

Moreover, the recent legislative session has seen a complete lack of action to support the safety and well-being of Corrections Officers. Critical proposals aimed at enhancing workplace safety and improving employee retention—such as repeated attempts to repeal the HALT Act—have consistently been blocked by Albany Democrats and the Hochul administration. Important bills designed to bolster safety, such as S5009, which would require the use of canines for contraband screening at correctional facilities, and S4560, which sought to establish a secure vendor program to prevent drug entry through mail, have all failed to advance. Additionally, the “death gamble” benefit bill for COs (S6406), which would provide essential incentives for experienced officers to remain in service, has been vetoed by the Governor twice.

“The inaction on these critical issues reflects a blatant disregard for the safety and rights of those who serve on the front lines of public safety,” Senator Walczyk stated. “The abrupt removal of health insurance for Corrections Officers is not merely an administrative oversight; it is an attack on the rights of dedicated state employees and their families, undermining the very foundation of the safety and security these individuals work tirelessly to uphold.”