



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew Gounardes

## Senator Gounardes Announces Legislation to Mandate that All Public Employers Adopt a Pandemic Emergency Preparedness Plan

ANDREW GOUNARDES July 9, 2020

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19, PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, S8617**

**Brooklyn, NY** - Senator Gounardes announced legislation, **S8617**, requiring that all public employers in New York State adopt a Pandemic Emergency Preparedness Plan. This legislation would require all public employers to draft and publish a plan to safeguard every employee's health and wellbeing to be deployed in the event of a disease outbreak and accompanying State of Emergency declaration.

As of May, it is estimated that more than 270 New York City employees have died as a result of COVID-19. The bill will require a designation of who can telecommute and clear protective measures for essential workers who must continue to show up in person.

"COVID-19 descended swiftly and demonstrated that our City and State government were not prepared for a pandemic. Our public servants were not provided with the proper safety measures, which in some cases cost them their lives," said **State Senator Andrew Gounardes**.

"Requiring public employers to draft and publish a contingency plan for the next global health crisis will be integral in saving lives and rebuilding the trust between public employees and workers. We need to protect those who kept our city running and can never get caught flat-footed like this again."

"As nurses working on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw first-hand how lack of preparation and shortages of personal protective equipment harmed nurses--as well as all caregivers and other essential workers--and our patients," said **NYSNA President Judy Sheridan-Gonzalez, RN**. "Our public sector nurses at NYC Health + Hospitals/Mayorals, Erie County Medical Center and Westchester Medical Center were particularly hard hit by COVID-19—in fact, suffering the majority of deaths due to COVID among our members. Senator Gounardes' bill (S8617) would require all public sector employers to have plans in place to protect workers and the public health, including requirements to maintain adequate supplies of PPE and give nurses and other workers a direct say in formulating these plans. This bill is critical, as we continue to fight the coronavirus and prepare for another resurgence."

"This legislation is a critical first step in state emergency planning as it requires public employers to work with the unions to develop an emergency response plan to provide public employees with greater clarity on their roles and responsibilities, to delineate their designated work locations and to ensure appropriate precautions are made to protect their personal health and safety in the event of resurgence of COVID-19 or another public health emergency," said **PEF President Wayne Spence**.

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2019-S8617

- 
- Introduced

- ◦ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- ◦ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Requires public employers to adopt a plan for operations in the event of a declared public health emergency involving a communicable disease

June 22, 2020

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Andrew Gounardes**

Do you support this bill?