



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

Gianaris, Reyes, And Advocates Celebrate The Health Department Finally Implementing Their NY Hero Act

MICHAEL GIANARIS September 6, 2021

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



NEW YORK – Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris, Assembly Member Karines Reyes, and members of the Essential Worker Coalition expressed their relief that the New York State Health Department finally certified Covid-19 as a threat to public health. This action comes after the [elected officials](#) and the [coalition](#) sent letters to Governor Kathy Hochul calling on her administration to issue the required certification after the previous administration did not.

“I’m very thankful Governor Hochul has acted quickly to save lives and protect workers by implementing the New York HERO Act,” said **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris**. “It took too

long to effectuate and too many workers have already sacrificed their health for our community's benefit, but we can finally recognize their efforts by giving workers the tools to protect themselves while on the job."

The NY HERO Act, passed earlier this year by the Legislature and signed into law by the outgoing Governor, requires the Department of Health to declare a disease, like covid-19, "a highly contagious, communicable disease that presents a serious risk of harm to public health" before the law's protections can be implemented. Until today, the required declaration was not issued by the state's healthy agency.

"New Yorkers have been eagerly awaiting the safe reopening of our state," said **Assembly Member Karines Reyes, R.N.** "With the more contagious COVID-19 Delta variant on the rise, we must take every active measure we can to keep the virus under control. I commend the Governor for swiftly taking action and directing the Health Department to identify COVID-19 as "highly contagious." The complete implementation of the NY HERO Act will ensure that businesses across the state have safety protocols in place to protect employees and customers against airborne infectious diseases like COVID-19."

"The fight against Covid-19 is far from over, as cases are surging across the state and country with the highly contagious Delta variant infecting workers and their communities. Enhancing health and safety has to be the number one priority. The implementation of NY HERO Act, the first-in-the-nation permanent airborne infectious disease standard, is crucial to protect and empower New Yorkers to fight this surge in COVID-19 cases. We are glad Governor Hochul is realizing this law today by ensuring its full implementation. This is how we support the essential workers who contribute so much to our state," said **Maritza Silva-Farrell, Executive Director of ALIGN, the organization coordinating the NY Essential Workers Coalition.**

The NY HERO Act, or the New York Health and Essential Rights Act, passed earlier this year by the Legislature and signed into law by the outgoing Governor, requires the Department of Health to declare a disease, like covid-19, "a highly contagious, communicable disease that presents a serious risk of harm to public health" before the law's protections can be implemented. Until today, the required declaration was not issued by the state's healthy agency.

The NY HERO Act, or the New York Health and Essential Rights Act, requires the Departments of Labor and Health to implement enforceable minimum standards for workplace safety. The regulations must include protocols on testing, PPE, social distancing, hand hygiene, disinfection,

and engineering controls. Workers would also be given a direct role in monitoring and reporting violations through workplace health and safety committees and employees would be protected from retaliation for utilizing their rights under the law.

The NY HERO Act is supported by more than 100 labor, community, and safety organizations, including the AFL-CIO.

Senator Gianaris and Assembly Member Reyes' letter to Governor Hochul can be found [here](#).
The Essential Worker Coalition's letter can be found [here](#).

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January 06, 2021

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by Michael Gianaris

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