



News from the Independent Democratic Conference

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Senate Co-Leader Jeff Klein, Sen. Diane Savino and Assemblyman Steve Otis Celebrate New Child Labor Laws Aimed at Protecting Child Models

NEW YORK, NY- Today, New York State Senate Co-Leader Jeff Klein, Senate Labor Committee Chairwoman Diane Savino, and Assemblyman Steven Otis celebrated the signing of a sweeping new child labor law that promises to end widespread exploitation of underage models in New York's fashion industry. Until today, minors in New York's fashion industry were forced to work without the protections of the state's child labor laws. But under a new law signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo late on Monday night, children in the fashion and modeling industries will now be provided the same protections afforded other young performers.

At the press conference, the legislators were joined by Supermodels Coco Rocha and Arnelis Sosa, in addition to Executive Director of the Model Alliance, Sara Ziff, child model Lily Goodman and other former child models and advocates.

Senate Majority Coalition Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) said, "This week's news is an inspiring success for child advocates everywhere. We were shocked when we learned about how New York—the fashion capital of the world—discriminated against young people who were trying to break into the industry. The successful passage of this legislation into law illustrates how we can make quick progress on important issues when we have the right partners and a smart approach. I commend Governor Cuomo, Senator Savino and Assemblyman Otis for providing these children the educational and financial protections they deserve."

Senator Diane Savino (D-Staten Island/Brooklyn), Chair of the Senate Labor Committee said, "As a former caseworker for NYC's Child Welfare Administration, I've dedicated my life to protecting children from abuse and neglect. Most models begin their career around the age of 13, sacrificing their education, health and financial security to model without the basic protections they deserve under New York's current law. By making this legislation the law in New York, we have brought an end to the rampant exploitation and sexual abuse of child models by giving child models the critical protections they've been denied for too long."

Assembly Sponsor Steve Otis (D-Rye) said, "Now, for the first time, child models will be adequately shielded under state law from exploitation, abuse and unacceptable working conditions. Our legislation provides print and runway models the same education and financial protections as other underage performers. I applaud Governor Cuomo for acting decisively to close this gap in the law."

Senators Klein and Savino, along with Assemblyman Otis, worked with the Model Alliance Executive Director Sara Ziff and other stakeholders to study the abuses and exploitation of children in the fashion industry. These abuses--and the shortfalls in New York's child labor laws-- were detailed in a report released by Klein and Savino's Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) in June. The success of the June report propelled the final legislation through the legislature, where it passed by near unanimous margins shortly after its introduction.

The new law **will afford** child models the following protections previously denied to them:

- **Responsible Person:** A responsible person must be designated to monitor the activity and safety for each child performer under the age of 16 at the work place;
- **Nurse:** An employer must provide a nurse with pediatric experience;

- **Education Requirement:** Mandates employers to provide teachers and a dedicated space for instruction;
- **Health and Safety:** Employers must provide safety-based instruction and information to performers, parents/guardians and responsible person and;
- **Financial Trust:** A trust must be established by a child performer's parent or guardian that an employer must transfer at least fifteen percent of the child's gross-earnings into.

The legislation also mandates that child models be included in the Arts and Cultural Affairs Law §35.01 and §35.03. This will require the parents or guardians of infants engaged in modeling to obtain judicial approval of certain contracts.

"Since we formed the Model Alliance last year, models have joined forces to improve working conditions in their industry. Today, we are thrilled that fashion models under 18 will finally be afforded the same employment, educational, and financial protections as other child performers in New York. I am grateful to Assemblyman Otis and Senators Klein and Savino for sponsoring this important bill, and I am delighted that Governor Cuomo has signed it into law, **said Sara Ziff, Executive Director, Model Alliance.** "This legislation could have a powerful, far-reaching effect: in addition to safeguarding young models, it will influence the images the industry creates, which could help promote a healthier ideal of beauty. I look forward to building on this success by continuing to promote fair labor standards in our industry."

"It seems incredible that young kids in the modeling industry haven't had equal rights to other child performers until now. Thank goodness for the Model Alliance and Sara Ziff's inexhaustible perseverance in getting this bill passed," **said Supermodel and Actress Milla Jovovich.**

Supermodel Coco Rocha said: "Having once been a child model myself, I know all too well that, until now, underage models have worked with very few legal protections in New York. The fashion industry's attempts at self-regulation have not been enough to ensure a safe working environment across the board for its minor models. For a long time, these children have needed and deserved the same basic protections afforded other child performers working in New York, and I could not be happier that this is now the case – thanks in no small part to the passion and diligence of Sara Ziff and the Model Alliance. Regardless of any anticipated extra burden of record keeping or expense, acting in the best interests of our children's health and well-being is, and always should be, a given. I'm thrilled to see us make a huge step in the right direction for the future of my industry."

"I started modeling when I was 15 years old. I traveled to many different places alone without a chaperone or with any real legal rights. It's a tremendous victory for the Model Alliance and much credit must go to Sara Ziff for working tirelessly to achieve this. The reality is most models start their careers as teenagers, so it's monumental that now models under the age of 18 will have the same rights as other child performers. It's a step in the right direction and hopefully the fashion industry can keep making progress in this area. Congratulations Sara and to all at the Model Alliance," **Supermodel Karen Elson said.**

Supermodel Arlenis Sosa said: "As a member of the Model Alliance, I am extremely happy and excited that child models will have the same rights and protections as other child performers in New York. This is a big step forward in the modeling industry and I am proud of all the hard work the Model Alliance has done to make this happen. Sara Ziff is incredibly hard working and passionate about leading this movement to transform the modeling industry into a great work environment for everyone and I am pleased to be a part of it."

"Thanks to the efforts of all of those who supported this legislation, today, New York's great and enduring modeling industry has just grown even greater," **said Doreen Small, Esq., Marquart & Small, LLP.**

Child model Lily Goodman said: "As a child model, I have heard the horror stories that the older models have shared about what happens when you don't have laws to protect children. I feel sad when I hear stories of older models that have had these negative experiences but I am very thankful that they took the time to try to protect all of the young models that are coming after them. I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Model Alliance, Sara Ziff, Senator Klein, Senator Savino, Assemblyman Otis, Governor Cuomo and all of the others who have worked so hard to get the Child Model Legislation passed."

"Actors' Equity Association is pleased that Governor Cuomo has formally signed into law the bill that will provide child models with the same employment, educational, and financial protections that Equity-represented child performers enjoy and that all child performers deserve," **said Actors' Equity Association Executive Director, Mary McColl.**

Designer, Nicole Miller said: “I am glad to hear this badly needed bill has passed. I have watched these vulnerable young girls show up in New York City for many years and I am glad this will help protect them.”

Maria Cognata, President, Marilyn Model Management said: “I have the upmost respect for Sara Ziff and her quest to help underage models. It is admirable to watch Sara’s passion and persistence come to fruition.”

“I want to commend the efforts of Sara Ziff, the Model Alliance, Governor Cuomo and New York State Senators Jeffrey Klein and Diane Savino. Their hard work establishing this groundbreaking legislation for our industry will provide clarity and protection for models that is long overdue,” **said Chris Gay, Executive Director of North American Operations of Elite World Group and General Manager of The Society Management in New York.**

James Scully, Casting Director said: "The passage of this bill will significantly curb the influx of underage models into the industry, which has unfortunately become the norm. The next generation of models will now be treated as individuals and not as a disposable workforce, allowing them the time and protection it takes to pursue long, successful careers."

"The American Guild of Musical Artists is pleased that Governor Cuomo has signed into law the bill that will protect child models in New York. Child models need and deserve the same protections as other child performers, not second rate protections,” **said Alan Gordon, National Executive Director, American Guild of Musical Artists, AFL-CIO.**

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