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Senate Democratic Majority Advances Legislation to Support New York's Workforce

Albany, NY – Today, the Senate Democratic Majority continues its commitment to strengthening New York's workforce, those who power our state's economy, by advancing legislation that enhances workplace protections and combats wage theft. This legislative package increases Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) benefits, streamlines wage theft claims, holds bad actors accountable, and strengthens enforcement against exploitative practices. It also extends paid sick leave to domestic workers, protects employees from coercive severance ultimatums, and ensures fair compensation by defining bonuses and non-discretionary payments as wages. By cracking down on payroll fund misappropriation and empowering the Department of Labor to issue stop-work orders for worker misclassification, these measures take decisive action against workplace exploitation.

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said, "New York's workforce is the engine that drives our economy, and they deserve fair wages, safe working conditions, and strong protections. This legislative package cracks down on bad actors who take advantage of workers with little consequence, marking another step forward in the fight against wage theft and workplace exploitation. I want to thank today's bill sponsors for standing up for New York's workforce and ensuring that every New Yorker is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve."

Senate Deputy Leader and Bill Sponsor Michael Gianaris said, "The imbalance of power in the workplace too often hurts employees who are compelled to enter agreements that are not in their interest. I am proud our Democratic majority continues to fight for New Yorkers against exploitative corporate policies including by passing my legislation today preventing coercive severance ultimatums."

Chair of the Labor Committee and Bill Sponsor Senator Jessica Ramos said, "At our joint Workforce Development Budget Hearing last week, the DOL made it clear that New York still has a pervasive wage theft problem, to the tune of \$3 billion missing from workers' pockets every year. That is missing from our streets, that is money missing from our local economy. This package of bills is designed to defend and prevent wage theft, modernize our paid sick leave, and give workers a boost as we continue to fight this affordability crisis."

The legislation being passed by the Senate Democratic Majority includes:

- **Establishes the No Severance Ultimatums Act:** This legislation, [S.372](#), sponsored by Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris, establishes the No Severance Ultimatums Act, which prohibits employers from delivering coercive severance ultimatums to employees and former employees reviewing severance agreements, and which provides employees ample time to review such agreements.
- **Increases TDI benefits and expands coverage:** This legislation, [S.172](#), sponsored by Senate Labor Chair Jessica Ramos, amends the Workers' Compensation Law (WCL) to increase short-term disability benefits provided in the form of Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) weekly cash benefits, and expands disability and paid family leave coverage.
- **Provides grounds for attachment and streamlines wage claims procedures:** This legislation, [S.4611](#), sponsored by Senate Labor Chair Jessica Ramos, creates grounds for attachment to allow wage theft victims to seek attachment of employers' assets during court action pendency, and amends the business corporation law and the limited liability company law to streamline procedures allowing employees to hold shareholders and owners personally liable for wage theft.
- **Extends paid sick leave to domestic workers:** This legislation, [S.4515](#), sponsored by Senate Labor Chair Jessica Ramos, requires employers of domestic workers to provide annual paid sick leave to such workers.
- **Establishes the crime of misappropriation of payroll funds:** This legislation, [S.4188](#), sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie, expands protections for employee payroll funds by establishing the crime of the misappropriation of payroll funds.
- **Enacts the Wage Payment Integrity Act:** This legislation, [S.2236](#), sponsored by Senator Andrew Gounardes, enacts the Wage Payment Integrity Act, which bolsters employee protections against wage theft by clarifying that all bonuses and other forms of employment remuneration that are not purely discretionary count as wages.
- **Allows stop-work order issuance for employee misclassification:** This legislation, [S.1514](#), sponsored by Senator Pete Harckham, authorizes the Commissioner of Labor to issue a stop-work order for employers that have misclassified their employees or that have misrepresented to insurance companies their employee count.

Bill Sponsor Senator Leroy Comrie said, “When workers don’t get paid what they’ve earned, it doesn’t just hurt them, it hurts their families, their neighborhoods, and the small businesses that rely on their support. Too many hardworking New Yorkers are left struggling to cover rent, put food on the table, and care for their loved ones because of payroll fraud. This bill helps to put an end to that by ensuring that employers who exploit their employees are held accountable. Fair pay isn’t just about a paycheck, it’s about strengthening our neighborhoods and building a more just economy for everyone. I am proud to have this legislation included as part of our Supporting Workers legislative package.”

Bill Sponsor Senator Andrew Gounardes said, “Workers deserve clear, fair and honest contracts. They also deserve clear, fair and honest labor protections. My Wage Payment Integrity Act protects workers against wage theft by clarifying the laws around bonuses, so employers can’t arbitrarily yank away payments that their employees have already earned. This is about increasing transparency, ensuring workers get paid what they’re owed, and creating healthier, better-functioning workplaces across New York.”

Bill Sponsor Senator Pete Harcham said, “By passing a comprehensive package of labor legislation, we are making an important step forward for the working families of New York. Misclassification of employees as independent contractors denies workers the rights they deserve—including minimum wage, overtime pay, unemployment insurance, health insurance and workers’ compensation. My legislation will empower the state’s Department of Labor to take decisive action to safeguard the rights of workers. We need to be able to shut down the places where these violations are being committed and check corporate scofflaws.”

Mario Cilento, President of the New York State AFL-CIO said, “We commend the Senate Leadership and Majority for passing this important package of bills aimed at enhancing disability benefits and combating wage theft and worker misclassification. These measures will ensure that workers who are victims of such violations promptly receive back pay and damages. A key aspect of this package is the increase in the state’s temporary disability insurance (TDI) benefit, which has not been updated in over 30 years. This bill modernizes and strengthens the TDI program to better support workers who sustain injuries or illnesses that are not work related, by helping them make ends meet while they recover. We extend our gratitude to Senate Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senate Labor Chair Jessica Ramos, and the bill sponsors for prioritizing the needs of working people.”

Rebecca Garrard, Interim Co-Executive Director of Citizen Action of New York said, “Citizen Action of NY applauds the NYS Senate’s passage of a package of bills that support the rights of workers in our state. At a time when exploration of labor is skyrocketing, it is imperative that policies are implemented that place a value on our state’s workforce. We are especially gratified to see the passage of Senator Ramos’s TDI legislation, which will finally ensure that employees who need time to deal with their own temporary health crises can do so without facing financial ruin or the loss of employment and health benefits. We thank Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Senator Ramos, and the entire Democratic conference for their important leadership on this issue.”

Michael Davoli, Senior Government Relations Director American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) said, “No one battling cancer should have to choose between feeding their family and keeping up with their treatment. Battling cancer is hard. Continuing to work full or even part time while undergoing cancer treatment is almost impossible. I am pleased that the Senate has taken this incredibly important step to ensure that cancer patients can focus on their health and not have to worry about losing their jobs or feeding their families.”

Shakira A. Kennedy, PhD, LMSW, Executive Director- NASW-NYS/NYC said, "Ensuring access to adequate Temporary Disability Insurance is not just a policy change—it’s a commitment to economic security, worker dignity, and a stronger, more resilient workforce."

Hugh Baran, Board Member, National Employment Lawyers Association/New York said, “With the Trump-Musk administration gutting federal labor law enforcement, workers in New York need all the help that they can get from lawmakers. We're heartened to see the Senate pass several important protections for workers -- including the Wage Theft Attachment Act and the Wage Payment Integrity Act, both of which will enhance workers' ability to recover stolen wages. We look forward to seeing the Senate continue to advance important worker protections this session, including through the state budget process.”

Richard Blum, Staff Attorney, the Employment Law Unit, The Legal Aid Society said, “The civil remedies in this package of bills form an important component of a workers’ rights agenda for New York. Providing job-protected medical leave at a sustainable level of pay and preventing employers who steal wages from hiding their assets are especially critical to protecting New York’s workers from illness and wage theft. We look forward to working with the Senate to see these and other critical protections enacted into law.”

Tamaé Memole, Managing Director, Primary Prevention said, “Prevent Child Abuse New York (PCA-NY) thanks the Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and members of the Senate for passing the bills in support of workers today. This package of legislation addresses employment and income issues that can directly contribute to reducing poverty. By alleviating economic pressures and family stress, New York can foster a sense of well-being and strengthen families. This, in turn, significantly decreases the risk of child abuse and maltreatment, creating a healthier, more resilient community for all.”

Jesse Workman, Senior Staff Attorney, A Better Balance said, “ We applaud the New York State Senate for prioritizing reform of the New York Temporary Disability Insurance law. No worker should ever be forced to choose between their paycheck and caring for their health. We hear from countless New Yorkers through our free legal helpline who are faced with this impossible decision because the state's paid medical leave program is so far behind. In 2025, workers and families can't afford to live on a benefit amount that has remained frozen for almost forty years. We thank Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Senator Ramos for their leadership and look forward to this overdue reform becoming law in New York State. New Yorkers can't wait.”

Bill Banfield, Assistant Executive Secretary-Treasurer, North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters said, “Wage theft is rampant in the construction industry – but the legislation passed today is a concrete step towards protecting blue collar workers in New York State. We applaud the Senate Majority for leading the fight on behalf of the hard-working men and women of the construction industry.”

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