



NEW YORK STATE SENATE
ALBANY, NY 12247

ALESSANDRA BIAGGI
SENATOR

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

March 30th, 2020

Dear Governor Andrew M. Cuomo,

We continue to extend our gratitude to you and your team for your leadership during this incredibly difficult time and all you are doing to keep New Yorkers safe.

We are urgently writing to elevate the dire situation currently occurring at the Jacobi Medical Center located in our districts in the Bronx. Nurses in the Emergency Department have called attention to an extreme shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), especially N95 face masks. On Saturday morning, March 28th, a group of nurses, members of the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA), staged a walk out from the hospital to raise awareness, which was reported on by a number of news outlets, including [The New York Times](#) today, under the headline *Nurses Die, Doctors Fall Sick and Panic Rises on Virus Front Lines*. The day after the walk out, a Jacobi Hospital nurse died from COVID-19.

Senator Biaggi's office was alerted to this situation and the planned walk out late Friday night, March 27th. We reached out to your office that evening for assistance, however we have yet to receive a response. We also alerted Mayor de Blasio's office, who reported that they had been made aware of the issue and were doing their best to distribute more supplies as they are made available. The supplies were not delivered and **we are asking you to immediately provide the necessary PPE to the staff at Jacobi Medical Center.**

At the beginning of this outbreak, Jacobi's hospital policy stated each nurse should wear a new mask for every new patient. In light of the shortage, the hospital amended their policy to re-use *one mask* for up to *five days*. Jacobi nurse Kelley Cabrera put it best: "We're being asked to do something we would have been reprimanded for a month ago. We're putting ourselves and our patients in danger by doing this."¹ While we understand this guidance may satisfy the current CDC policy, Sean Petty, a pediatric nurse at Jacobi, explained, "This policy that was put out by the CDC is killing nurses. [...] We are going to lose more."² We must have a higher standard here in New York, the

¹ <https://nypost.com/2020/03/27/jacobi-nurses-rebel-against-wearing-same-coronavirus-mask-for-5-days/>

² <https://nypost.com/2020/03/28/nurses-protest-coronavirus-mask-and-glove-shortage-in-the-bronx/>

epicenter of the crisis, in not just our country, but now the world. Simply put, hospital policy should never be dictated by supply. We must organize immediately to provide the supplies needed.

If this crisis is our generation's war, doctors and nurses are our soldiers on the frontlines. These brave individuals want to keep reporting to work, but any hope our state has of recovering from this emergency lies with keeping our healthcare workers safe so that they can continue to treat New Yorkers. Last week we tragically lost two New York City nurses to COVID-19, and just this weekend, Freda Ocran, Nurse Educator for all of Jacobi's new nurses and formally top nurse in the hospital's Psych Unit, passed away from the virus after voicing concerns about the lack of PPE at the hospital. We must do all we can to prevent more deaths.

To protect the lives of the healthcare workers in our districts, and those whose lives depend on them, we implore you to quickly direct the necessary supplies for our brave nurses, doctors, and hospital personnel at Jacobi Medical Center. We look forward to working with you to address this urgent matter.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AB' with a large loop at the end.

Alessandra Biaggi
State Senator
34th State Senate District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathalia' with a stylized flourish.

Nathalia Fernandez
Assembly Member
80th Assembly District

cc: New York State Nurses Association
131 W 33rd Street
New York, NY 10001