

NEW YORK ESSENTIAL WORKERS COALITION



Dear Lieutenant Governor Hochul and Commissioner Zucker,

COVID-19 rates are skyrocketing across the state and, with no legal protections in place, workers are risking exposure on the job. On the first day of your new administration, we urge you to fully implement the NY HERO Act and protect the working people of New York.

We are a statewide group of unions, worker centers, legal service providers, immigrant rights groups, community organizations, and health and safety experts. Our organizations represent hundreds of thousands of essential workers across the state who have done everything that New York has asked of them to get us through this pandemic.

Our members fought hard for the NY HERO Act and, in May, Governor Cuomo signed the historic act into law -- creating the first permanent airborne infectious disease prevention standard in the nation to protect all workers and work sites from COVID-19 and future airborne infectious diseases. In order for these crucial protections to be implemented, the State Department of Health must classify COVID-19 as “a highly contagious communicable disease that presents a serious risk of harm to the public health.” We are writing to express our deep concern that the Department of Health has failed to take this simple step to protect public health and is not requiring employers to implement the basic worksite protections that the NY HERO Act was designed to address.

As cases surge throughout the state due to the Delta variant, it is painfully obvious that COVID-19 is still highly contagious and there is no evidence that it has ceased to be a serious public health risk. Test positivity rates are at their highest point since February -- when vaccines were not widely available and a state of emergency was still in place. Already this month nearly 200 New Yorkers have died as a result of Covid-19.

We understand that New Yorkers are ready for things to get back to normal after more than seventeen months of dealing with COVID-19. Nobody feels this more than our members who have worked in person throughout the pandemic and whose communities have borne the brunt of infections and deaths. Unfortunately, the science shows that COVID-19 is still here and highly contagious and dangerous to the public. More and more New Yorkers are returning to work and they deserve to be able to do their jobs without being exposed to COVID-19. With school reopenings around the corner it is crucial that the common sense basic safety standards

promised under the NY HERO Act be implemented in order to avoid unnecessary illness and death and another statewide shutdown.

When you take office next week, we strongly urge the incoming administration and the Department of Health to declare that COVID-19 is “A highly contagious communicable disease that presents a serious risk of harm to the public health.” By accepting this reality, the health and safety of all New Yorkers will be protected and the promise of the NY HERO Act can be realized.

9/11 Environmental Action

Adhikaar

Alianza Agrícola

ALIGN NY

Cabrini Immigrant Services

Citizen Action of New York

Committee of Interns and Residents/ SEIU

Communications Workers of America (CWA) District 1

Food Chain Workers Alliance

La Colmena

Laundry Workers Center

Make the Road New York

National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA)

National Employment Law Project

NDLON National Day Laborer Organizing Network

New York Civil Liberties Union

New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health

New York Communities for Change

New York Immigration Coalition

New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA)

North East New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health

NY/NJ Regional Joint Board, Workers United/SEIU

NY Nail Salon Workers Association

Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU)

UFCW Local 2013

United Auto Workers Region 9A

Western New York Council on Occupational Safety and Health

Worker Center of Central New York

Worker Justice Center of NY