

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



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Senator Helming Statement on State's Vaccine Mandate for Health Care Workers

"I am extremely concerned about the state's vaccine mandate for health care workers, and the impact this may have on staffing levels in our hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living facilities, especially in our rural communities.

After speaking with a great number of my constituents – from administrative leads to nurses on the front lines to critical support staff – I am very concerned that this mandate could cause a wave of staff resignations and jeopardize access to care for local residents, including our most vulnerable. Several Upstate county administrators, including three of the counties I represent, have indicated that their hospitals and nursing homes have already started to receive letters of resignation.

I am equally concerned about the state's plan to determine and address these potential impacts. What is the Department of Health's plan to ensure adequate staffing and the continuity of care should the worst happen? How can the Department of Labor support those workers who will be losing their jobs?

Our health care workers deserve our consideration, respect and appreciation. They have heroically coped with staffing shortages, burnout, PTSD, low morale and other challenges. Yet they have not quit. They have kept working through the storm, sacrificing time with their families, risking their own physical and mental health, to help their patients recover and survive, and to be there when any of us need them. It saddens me that many people may leave their calling because of this mandate.

We should all be committed to a solution that protects timely access to care in our communities, and supports our health care workers. These individuals continue to work through a pandemic and have dedicated their lives to caring for our most vulnerable.

I support our county and public health officials in asking the state to modify this vaccine requirement, perhaps with a testing option such as that provided for school and state employees."

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