



NYIC State 2021 Priorities

Ensuring Economic Justice and Good Jobs:

NY HERO Act ([A.2681/S.1034](#))

COVID-19 has had an immense impact on workers, communities, and small businesses. The first wave of the coronavirus pandemic was particularly devastating for Black and brown communities -- Black and brown New Yorkers were twice as likely to die from Covid-19 as white New Yorkers. During the first wave, workplace transmissions were a key driver of Covid-19 spread, particularly in Black and Brown communities where essential workers never stopped working. Preventing workplace spread is critical for preventing a second wave and keeping these communities safe.

Without protections, workers are at risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19 at work and bringing the virus home to their families and communities. Small businesses are threatened with shutdowns, while the worst employers act as superspreaders. Scientific evidence shows that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), social distancing, sanitizing, ventilating, screening, and testing are key to preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. Workers know best how to make sure these safety measures are implemented in their workplaces.

Recommendation

Pass the New York Health & Essential Rights Act ([A.2681/S.1034](#)), or NY HERO Act, in order to require all businesses to adopt enforceable safety and health standards to protect workers from exposure and spread of an airborne infectious disease. Worker protections are critical to preventing workplace spread and ensuring that New York's economy can reopen safely.

The NY HERO Act directs the Department of Labor to issue an airborne infectious disease standard that must be followed by businesses to protect all workers in the state, which will include protocols on: testing, face masks, PPE, social distancing, hand hygiene, disinfection, and engineering controls. The bill also authorizes the creation of worker health and safety committees that will be empowered to raise complaints and report violations and includes strong anti-retaliation provisions that allow workers to exercise their rights without fear of reprisal.

The NY HERO Act holds employers accountable by enacting strong penalties and enforcement mechanisms that will lead to increased compliance and lower the transmission rates of airborne infectious diseases, which in turn will boost consumer confidence in the economy.

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