

# Healthcare workers: Calling on GOP to allow vote on Healthcare Heroes Act

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**Home care workers, nurses, hospital and nursing home workers call on GOP legislative leaders to allow a vote on Healthcare Heroes Act to protect healthcare workers, patients and communities**

**WISCONSIN** — Frontline healthcare workers launched a grassroots effort to flood Speaker Robin Vos and Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald's offices with calls and emails demanding they bring the legislature into session and schedule a vote on the Healthcare Heroes Act (HCHA). As COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to rise, healthcare workers are urging legislators to move quickly to pass the bill, which would ensure that every healthcare worker in Wisconsin has paid sick leave, hazard pay, and covering all the costs of COVID-19-related healthcare needs for frontline healthcare workers.

"We've been risking our lives every day at work, and many of us have vulnerable family members; every day I worry about exposing my husband to COVID-19," said **Gertrude Murray, a certified nursing assistant at the Jewish Home in Milwaukee**. "While we're working hard, we also expect our elected leaders to work hard to keep us safe. Instead, it feels as though we are being ignored by the very people elected to show up for us. After months of putting it all on the line for my patients, Robin Vos and Scott Fitzgerald won't even give us a vote on a bill to protect healthcare workers. How can you ignore the needs of healthcare workers at a time like this?"

Rep. Robyn Vining and Sen. Jon Erpenbach introduced the bill and it quickly gained support from almost every Senate and Assembly Democrat. Republican leadership has effectively stalled the Healthcare Heroes Act. Now, healthcare workers, union and not-yet-union, along with their supporters, are urging the Republican leaders to take steps that allow the bill to move forward and support the needs of essential frontline workers during this pandemic.

The Healthcare Heroes Act would give Wisconsin frontline healthcare workers, from hospitals and nursing homes to first responder and homecare agencies:

- **Paid sick time:** Everyone covered by the HCHA will receive an additional 15 days of paid sick time from their employer if they contract a communicable disease.
- **Free COVID-19 testing and treatment:** All insurance carriers will be mandated to cover 100% of expenses of COVID-19 testing and treatment for healthcare workers
- **Hazard pay:** Healthcare workers will receive an additional \$15 an hour on top of their current wage or 1.5 times their regular wage, whichever is greater.

In recent weeks, Wisconsin healthcare workers have sent more than 3,400 emails and calls to Speaker Robin Vos and Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald asking for their support in passing the Healthcare Heroes Act.

“As a certified nursing assistant/resident assistant, I work very closely with many residents every day. I feed them, I dress them, and I help them in the bathroom. Social distancing is often impossible at my job, putting me at higher risk of contracting COVID-19,” said **Michi Schroeder, a caregiver at a nursing home in Madison**. “If I get exposed at work, I shouldn’t go bankrupt trying to pay for my treatment.”

“As a nurse on the front lines of this pandemic working tirelessly to care for sick patients, I worry every day about contracting this virus,” said **Caitlyn Zaverousky, a registered nurse in Antigo and member of Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals**. “If the worst happens, I shouldn’t have to take

unpaid time or risk losing my job. We need to take care of the caregivers. We have told legislators what it is like and why we need paid sick time, COVID care and hazard pay. Now, we need the Speaker and Majority Leader to do their jobs and allow a vote on this life-saving bill.”

SEIU Healthcare Wisconsin represents more than 6,000 healthcare workers across hospitals, in home care and in nursing homes. Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals represents more than 2,500 nurses and health professionals in Wisconsin.