

Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals: Healthcare Workers Applaud Move by Assembly Democrats to Introduce COVID Bill

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WISCONSIN — On the first day of the legislative session, Assembly Democrats introduced a COVID-19 response package to address the needs of frontline healthcare workers and economic well being of working families and small businesses across the state. Frontline healthcare workers from SEIU Healthcare Wisconsin and Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, the leading unions that represent healthcare workers in Wisconsin, applauded the move and renewed calls for policymakers to pass a COVID response bill without delay.

“Healthcare workers are very much still in the thick of this crisis and need support and tools to make sure we can continue to do our vital jobs protecting the public,” said **Ramon Argandona, Madison hospital worker and President of SEIU Healthcare Wisconsin**. “For months, healthcare workers have been raising the alarm as the crisis worsens and our hospitals are at capacity. We can’t afford more burn-out, more healthcare workers succumbing to trauma, or exhaustion. Wisconsin needs a real COVID response that includes critical measures to protect and support those of us working on the front lines. We applaud the Assembly Democrats for doing what is right and necessary. Action is long overdue. Wisconsin state lawmakers must come together now and adopt a COVID bill that meets the needs of healthcare workers and first responders. There is far too much at stake to delay.”

Throughout the pandemic, Wisconsin’s healthcare workers have been organizing to demand action on the COVID crisis and support for frontline workers. In June, [state Democratic lawmakers introduced](#) the Healthcare Heroes Act, which would ensure

all healthcare workers have fully paid sick time, pandemic pay, and no-cost COVID health care coverage during the pandemic, but Republican leadership effectively stalled the bill's passage. Still, healthcare workers continued to mobilize, launching phone and email campaigns to demand legislators get to work and holding protests at the Capitol building.

With today's bill introduced by Assembly Democrats, healthcare workers expressed relief and gratitude that the proposed legislation addresses their needs. The new bill package includes key measures to help mitigate the COVID-19 crisis, including the provisions from the Healthcare Heroes Act, Medicaid expansion, and increased funding for public health responses.

"Every day of this pandemic, healthcare workers in hospitals, nursing homes, labs, clinics, home care and first response settings have put our lives on the line to care for our patients," said **Jeff Weber, Registered Nurse in Milwaukee and President of WI Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals**. "With the crisis still ongoing, healthcare workers continue to risk our own health and safety, without proper protection or support. We need our leaders to act decisively to pass legislation that meets the needs of healthcare workers and first responders, including paid sick leave, pandemic pay, no-cost testing and treatment for any COVID-19-related condition, and full, no-questions-asked workers compensation coverage for COVID-19. When the public needs us, we show up and we do our jobs. It is not too much to ask that our elected leaders do everything in their power to do the same. The time to act is now."