

Co-Sponsorship: IOVINO - Payment of Contract Services in Schools during the Pandemic of 2020

Posted: March 27, 2020 4:19 PM

To: All Senate Members

From: Senator Pam Iovino

Subject: Payment of Contract Services in Schools during the Pandemic of 2020

In the near future I plan on introducing legislation that would amend the recently passed Pandemic of 2020 section of the Public School Code to provide all school contractors with the same protections given to school bus transportation services.

We are in unprecedented times. In the flurry to address outstanding issues that arose in schools throughout the Commonwealth since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, employees who provide services to schools through contracts were left out. Thousands of workers across the Commonwealth are no longer getting paychecks for services school districts have budgeted for. Compounding their circumstances, many of these individuals have lost their healthcare coverage.

In this difficult time, we should not be allowing people to lose their paycheck or livelihood for services they are unable to perform due to the constraints placed on schools during the COVID-19 outbreak. It is not that these contractors do not want to work; instead, they are physically unable to work because schools are closed.

My legislation would amend the Pandemic of 2020 section of the Public School Code to allow school entities to renegotiate a contract for contract service providers during the period of school closure. These are the same protections provided to school bus transportation services.

Please join me in sponsoring this legislation.

Co-Sponsorship: SCHWANK - Child Care Assistance

Posted: March 27, 2020 3:18 PM

To: All Senate Members

From: Senator Judith L. Schwank and Senator Lindsey M. Williams

Subject: Child Care Assistance

In the near future we will be introducing legislation to support childcare centers, pre-K, and Head Start programs and their hard-working employees affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout Pennsylvania, non-essential businesses have been ordered to close, including many childcare centers. As we fight the spread of COVID-19, we must institute policies to help working families and small businesses and the people that work for them. During this pandemic, it is critical for Pennsylvania to support childcare for essential workers.

Key, but often neglected components of workforce development are early childhood learning and childcare. At this critical juncture, while our economy is teetering on the edge of disaster, we must invest in early learning programs like Pre-K Counts, Head Start and subsidized childcare. These programs are critical to enabling parents to return to work confident that their children are being properly cared for and are receiving the education they will need to succeed in life.

According to the Start Strong PA and Pre-K for PA campaigns, Pennsylvania could see permanent closures of nearly one-third of its childcare centers from an extended economic shut down. We must provide resources for childcare centers during this pandemic to make sure families have the support and that employees are getting paid.

In order to address these issues, our legislation would:

- Provide \$100 million to childcare centers to cover administrative expenses, including payroll, and fill the loss of tuition payments from families;
- Provide \$17 million for Pre-K and Head Start to cover administrative expenses, including payroll to compensate for lost co-payments that would otherwise have been collected; and
- Appropriate \$50 million to extend Pre-K and Head Start programs into the summer to mitigate early childhood learning losses for students.

Mitigating the spread of COVID-19 is crucial to ensuring the state's citizens remain healthy into the future. However, we must not forget about the continued needs of families with children, nor the childcare centers who are needed to provide services, as we navigate through these unprecedented challenges.

I hope you will join me in co-sponsoring this important piece of legislation.

Co-Sponsorship: SANTARSIERO - Protecting Workers During Public Health Emergencies

Posted: March 9, 2020 10:35 AM

To: All Senate Members

From: Senator Steven J. Santarsiero

Subject: Protecting Workers During Public Health Emergencies

No one should have to fear losing their job, through no fault of their own, during a public health emergency. In the United States, the power to isolate and quarantine exists at both the federal and state level. Unfortunately, most states, including Pennsylvania, do not address whether an employer can fire an employee while under quarantine or in isolation. That's why I'll be introducing legislation to protect workers from retaliation when they take leave during public health emergencies, like the ongoing coronavirus epidemic.

On March 6, 2020, Governor Wolf signed an emergency disaster declaration to provide increased support to state agencies involved in the response to the virus. The state has already sent legal quarantine notices to the individuals with presumed positive cases of the virus. Fortunately, the individuals in the state with presumed positive cases of the virus have voluntarily quarantined themselves at home, which will end when they've been without symptoms for 14 days.

However, we need to support workers so they can take the necessary precautions to prevent the spreading of the disease, without fear of repercussions from their employer. Workers should not be fired if they've been quarantined or isolated during a public health emergency.

Please join me in co-sponsoring this important legislation.

Co-Sponsorship: FARNESE - Emergency expansion of FMLA

Posted: March 17, 2020 3:16 PM
To: All Senate Members
From: Senator Lawrence M. Farnese, Jr.
Subject: Emergency expansion of FMLA

As protective measures are implemented statewide to protect our constituents from Covid-19 we must also act to protect them from economic fallout as a result of this crisis.

Hopefully, congress will soon pass relief legislation, but the proposed Families First Coronavirus Response Act leaves several holes which my legislation will fill, including the following provisions:

- Emergency paid sick leave for all employees not covered by the federal bill.
- Extending paid sick leave for an additional 4 days to cover the full two-week quarantine period as the federal bill only covers 10 days.
- Paid leave will be extended to those laid off or who's workplaces have closed.
- The state will cover the additional 1/3 pay rate for those who must take leave to care for a child whose school has closed so employees receive 100% of pay.
- Extend family medical leave to all employees at 100% wage rate starting immediately upon starting leave to cover the unpaid time under the federal bill and then the additional 1/3 pay to fill the gap for 100% pay rate though the term covered by the Family Medical Leave Act.
- Requiring employers to reinstate workers returning from leave.

Co-Sponsorship: COLLETT - American Working Family Relief Action Plan – Front-line Worker Protections

Posted: March 31, 2020 4:47 PM

To: All Senate Members

From: Senator Maria Collett and Senator Lindsey M. Williams

Subject: American Working Family Relief Action Plan – Front-line Worker Protections

We are facing unprecedented challenges as we fight the spread of COVID-19. As the country and the world institute policies and procedures on how to keep our communities safe, our front-line workers continue to operate in dangerous working conditions on a daily basis. Workers in healthcare facilities, public assistance workers and other direct support professionals, and our first responders, face increased risk to their health as we rely on them to provide life-sustaining services to our communities.

We must provide front-line workers with the tools necessary for maintaining strong mental and physical health and to mitigate the spread of coronavirus on work sites that are still in physical operation.

Our legislation would do so in several ways:

- Provide emergency funding for safety equipment, including personal protective equipment such as N95 masks, and mental health supports for healthcare workers and other public sector workers classified as essential;
- Create clear standards for the implementation of containment control plans in healthcare facilities, including emergency standards and accountability;
- Prioritize front-line workers in COVID-19 testing;
- Suspend, or limit, in-person services to the greatest extent possible by shifting to virtual assistance working standards for public workers classified as essential;
- Require cleaning standards for workplaces that remain open during this crisis to meet or exceed state and federal standards for COVID-19 prevention.

Together, we can stop the spread of COVID-19 by practicing social distancing and using other transmittal mitigation strategies across our communities. However, we still need to take action on behalf of those workers currently unable to implement mitigation strategies by providing them with explicit supports to keep them as safe as possible.

We hope you will join us by signing on to this important worker protection legislation.

Co-Sponsorship: TARTAGLIONE - Covid-19 Food Worker Safety Act

Posted: March 25, 2020 2:37 PM
To: All Senate Members
From: Senator Christine M. Tartaglione
Subject: Covid-19 Food Worker Safety Act

In the near future, I will be introducing legislation that would designate workers at food processing/protein facilities across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as “essential employees” and/or “front line employees” for all matters/circumstances, including but not limited to childcare, safety measures and paid leave to be made available to these workers.

These workers are vital to the food supply chain that nourish and feed our communities. It is imperative that Employers should take the following necessary, preventative actions to protect these workers:

Social Distancing: Employers should make available more space(s) for employees to take their breaks and meal periods. This includes opening up any conference or training rooms as well as temporary accommodations, such as a heated tent. Break times should be adjusted to reduce the number of employees on break at any given time. Table configurations should be changed so that the employees are always facing forward and not across from each other.

Start times should be staggered to mitigate exposures of large groups of employees. Any time/attendance tracking devices (i.e. biometric punching in/out) should not be utilized to prevent worker exposure. For any meetings or trainings, Employers should conduct in smaller groups with distancing in the rooms. For those with access, the training can be provided online.

Employers should limit the number of visitors to their facilities to mitigate the risk of exposures. This should include limiting access to only established third party providers/contractors (i.e. Security/Clean-Up/Union Representatives) until further notice. For those that continue to have access, self-screening guidelines should be implemented at the entrance to all facilities. This includes asking about past travel as well as current health status.

Temporary employees should not be utilized interchangeably between various worksites; temporary employees need to be properly screened and used for a defined timeframe (a two-week minimum) at a particular facility.

Employers should increase and deepen the level of cleaning in all facilities. This should include an increase in the number of times high-use areas and surfaces (i.e. handrails, doorknobs, bathroom doors, etc.) are disinfected frequently. Employers should make available sanitizers and other disinfectant wipes in both common areas and work areas. Break rooms, locker rooms and common

areas should be immediately cleaned after utilization by employees (and on a continual basis). Employers should limit the number of employees at a given time in a locker room. Employers should give access to and allow employees regular access and time to wash hands and sanitize.

Paid Benefit Policies: If an employee is directed to [or has to] quarantine, the Employer should provide financial compensation (at the employee's regular rate of pay) for the duration of the infection or quarantine. A quarantine may, among other things, be due to exposure to someone in the household. Where applicable, no Employer should disrupt or have an employee's benefits terminated because of any quarantine or medical leave. In the case of any short term disability, Employers should waive any waiting period for any COVID-19 related matter/claim.

Attendance Policies: Employers should suspend their attendance policies surrounding any quarantine (whether medically directed or voluntary) or COVID-19 related circumstance. For circumstances that involve the care of a family member or for childcare related issues, the Employers should not penalize any employee and allow either (1) use of any personal paid time off ("PTO") or (2) an unpaid leave of absence.

Protocols if an Employee is Diagnosed with COVID-19: If the Employer has a confirmed case at their facility, the Employer should immediately clean the production line/department the employee was on and send those employees that worked on the same line home immediately (with their regular pay for the remainder of their shift). Further, the Employer should map the path the employee took in the previous day(s) and cleaning those areas immediately. Those employees that were identified as being in contact with the infected employee should also be quarantined and paid up to fourteen (14) days at their regular rate of pay.

Employers should ensure they are posting and providing communications (whether in writing or verbal) in additional languages, where applicable, to ensure all workers are understanding of policies and protocols in their native or primary language.

Please join me in sponsoring this legislation to protect our workers and food chain during this challenging time.