



Duckworth, Blumenthal, Markey, Gillibrand Introduce Legislation to Create COVID-19 Victim Compensation Fund for Essential Workers

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WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Ed Markey (D-MA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Tim Kaine (D-VA) today introduced a bill that would create a new fund to provide compensation for injuries to any individual, or their families, who are deemed an essential worker and required to leave their home to perform services and who have become ill or died as a result of COVID-19. The *Pandemic Heroes Compensation Act* is modeled after the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF). U.S. Representatives Carolyn Maloney (D-NY-12), Peter King (R-NY-02) and Jerrold Nadler (D-NY-10) also introduced the legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“Our nation’s dedicated health care workers, first responders, letter carriers and legions of other vital essential workers are serving on the front lines to care for patients battling COVID-19 infections and keep our country running during a deadly pandemic that has already killed more than 80,000 Americans,” said Duckworth. “While we have to do much more to protect these men and women as they take on greater risks during this pandemic, we also need to recognize the sad reality that our nation has a responsibility to take care for the loved ones of those essential workers who perish as a result of their decision to go back to work to help others.”

“We owe our frontline workers more than just words, but real action to recognize their sacrifice and service. Over these past months, feeding our families, staying safe, and surviving illness would have been impossible without these essential workers,” said Blumenthal. “These heroes on the front line vary widely in jobs from health care professionals and first responders to grocery store employees, delivery drivers, janitorial staff, and transit workers – what they have in common is clearly uncommon courage and

dedication. Frontline workers continue to put their lives on the line, and they and their families deserve more than platitudes – they’ve earned full, fair compensation for the risks they’ve taken on our behalf.”

“Essential workers are risking their health and safety to keep shelves stocked, buildings cleaned, mail delivered, and garbage picked up,” Markey said. “From the doctors and nurses, to the grocery store cashiers, to the sanitation and postal workers, we owe a debt of gratitude to frontline and essential worker, but gratitude is not enough. I am proud to cosponsor the “Pandemic Heroes Compensation Act” to provide these workers with financial assistance if they fall ill or die from the coronavirus. These workers have been there for us, and we must be there for them.”

“Our essential workers risk their health and their lives daily to keep us safe,” said Gillibrand. “Essential workers have stepped up for our country. From the beginning of this crisis they have been serving on the front lines, getting sick, and some unfortunately are dying. Now it’s time for Congress to step up for them. The Pandemic Heroes Compensation Act will provide a critical fund to ensure our nation’s heroes and their families receive the resources they need. I am proud to support this important bipartisan bill in the Senate, and I will work with my colleagues to ensure it becomes law.”

The *Pandemic Heroes Compensation Act* would:

- Establish a compensation fund for all essential workers, personnel, and their families, across all industries, that were required to leave their homes to perform their services and became ill or died as a result of COVID-19
- Support essential workers affected by COVID-19 across the country in their recovery by providing critical financial assistance to help with medical costs, loss of employment, loss of business, replacement services, and burial costs
- Authorize appropriated funds as needed for 5 years with the fund permanently closing one fiscal year after the Special Master determines that no additional claims can be filed
- Create a new website and office developed and administered by a Special Master to assist in the application process
- Maximize compensation for essential workers and their families by simplifying the application process to get those affected back on their feet.

Family members who share homes with essential workers and became sick through contact with the essential worker would also be eligible to file a claim. The compensation application would allow claimants to provide information regarding the extent of their loss for consideration. Eligible individuals would receive compensation no later than 20 days after approval.

The Members joined in a [virtual event](#) last week with the Uniformed Fire Officers Association (UFOA), Uniformed Firefighters Association (UFA), National Rural Letter Carriers Association (NRLCA), and SMART, the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers; to discuss the legislation and its importance to essential workers in all industries. In addition to those listed above, the legislation has also been endorsed by Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and DC37.