

# Working to Keep Firefighters, Teachers & Nurses on the Job

## *The Heroes Act, 116<sup>th</sup> Congress*

*"If Congress and the White House can draw on the same spirit of unity & resilience that the American people have shown, The Heroes Act will be signed into law and its urgent assistance will reach the people who need it most."*

❖ **Paul Tonko**

### **FIREFIGHTERS**

*Since the first indication that the virus was present in the community, six fire fighters have confirmed positive for COVID-19. Another 42 fire fighters have been placed in quarantine due to exposure, and one was hospitalized. Upon return to duty, and while on a fire scene, he experienced abnormal shortness of breath and was immediately transported and treated at the hospital.*

*The women and men of the Albany Fire Department - and fire fighters across the county - are front and center in the fight against the coronavirus. We collectively answer the call each time an alarm rings - and we need the U.S. Congress to respond to our alarm. Ensuring that local budgets will have the money to keep the fire house properly staffed and equipment on their trucks to protect each of us and the members of community is a request that every Albanian, New Yorker and American expects and deserves.*

❖ **Robert Mengel, President, Albany Permanent Professional Fire Fighters Association**

### **PUBLIC SERVICES**

*I am a caseworker for a county department of social services. Part of my job is to visit homes and assess the safety of children and families. Staffing has always been a concern for caseworkers and without us in the field children's lives could be put at risk and placed in harm's way. New York State needs federal aid now to make sure that does not happen.*

❖ **Katherine Allen, Social Services Caseworker in NY-20**

*I am a Senior Plant Operator for a Water & Sewer Department and the President of CSEA Local 886. It is my job to monitor and repair the town's tens of thousands of miles of water and sewer pipes. My team and I have continued to work, putting our own health and safety at risk, to safeguard this vital service. I worry services like clean drinking water or wastewater disposal could be at risk of being cut and I want to thank Congressman Tonko for fighting for workers and local government aid to ensure we are not needed today and gone tomorrow.*

❖ **Josh Walter, Civil Service Employees Association, Local 1000 AFSCME, AFL-CIO**

## **NURSING HOME CARE WORKERS**

*In the first month or so, the virus was spreading through our nursing home and many of our beloved residents were getting sick and dying. We put our lives on the line for our residents and then many of us got sick too. Finally, the New York State Department of Health came in and we received PPE after many weeks working without it. But, you can't just use ANY PPE. It is important that the equipment is sized correctly. My face mask didn't fit and when I asked for another one, I was denied. Many of my co-workers have gowns that don't fit them.*

*I tested positive for COVID-19 and I am now home. No nursing home worker, no healthcare worker should be denied the appropriate fitting PPE, especially during this pandemic. We just don't have enough information. The nursing home owners and management must be honest and transparent with us, we need to know about policies and procedures for dealing with this crisis and we because things change so quickly, we need to be consistently updated. That is the respectful thing to do and it is the safe thing to do.*

### **❖ Crystal Carmona, Certified Nursing Assistant (C.N.A.)**

*It has been a rough few months. While the Department of Health did eventually come in and we received PPE, it didn't fit everyone. There are too many caregivers here with gowns that just don't fit and they can't get what they need. Appropriate PPE is a priority, but there is so much more. We need training about how to use the PPE and how to safely help COVID-19 patients. EVS workers need to know how to clean the rooms, especially when a COVID-19 patient has left that bed, or someone is coming into that bed. We need goggles to protect our eyes and footwear. Without this, the virus will continue to spread. We are scared for our residents, and ourselves and our families. We don't want to go home and infect our loved ones. The fact that this is a pandemic means that COVID-19 doesn't only impact our nursing home—it affects our entire community.*

### **❖ Dorothy Collins, Certified Nursing Assistant (C.N.A.)**

## **TEACHERS**

*I am a 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade public school teacher from the Enlarged City School District of Troy, NY. I have been teaching for Troy Schools for 25 years. With the arrival of Covid-19, my job has become a completely different world. I have been faced with challenges I have never encountered before, but what bothers me most is the financial inequities with children in our district. I cannot imagine what this will look like next year if we do not get more funding for school districts in need. Cutting budgets and not providing money is the same as cutting out a child's educational right to learn. It is not fair that children who need the most support are being left behind.*

### **❖ Mariana Brunell, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade School 16, Troy Teachers Association**

*At this present time, we are looking at a deficit that will have our district defunding the reading department. The reading department is the one department that helps our children to acquire the skills needed to be on the same grade level as their peers. A cut to this department continues to foster a system where the neediest children, our black, brown and poor children will suffer. If you value the profession of teaching, the future of our children and the hardworking parents that are now deemed essential to holding the economy and our future in their hands. I am pleading with you to fund our schools.*

❖ **Tenica Wilcox, Carroll Hill Elementary School Grade 4, Troy Teachers Association**

*As a High School ELA teacher, Covid-19 has brought out apathy, frustration, and depression in many of my students, but what students are missing most of all, is the community we were able to build within my classroom. My students face challenges of prioritizing and connection. Some are working to help out their families, others are sinking back into depression, others are afraid to log on to virtual classes, or are struggling with the assignments and scheduling of their day. Covid-19 has stolen from my students the routine, the comradery, the guarantee that we will be there for them. It has stolen from them their youth, their trial and error time of life, and most of all their in-person connections to those in the world around them. For this group of students, education will never be the same again, and will likely be a forever struggle in their world.*

❖ **Beth Willson, Troy HS English Teacher, Troy Teachers Association President**

*During the past six weeks, the impact COVID 19 has had on the lives of our students can't even begin to be imagined. Due to the financial strains caused by the resulting economic crash, our district decided on the unprecedented and short-sighted solution of laying off the entire Reading department. While on paper this may sound as if it will have little impact, however, it is going to have a life-long impact on many of these students.*

❖ **Sarah Rames, Reading Troy City Schools, Troy Teachers Association**

*Federal funding for school districts already fails to be distributed equitably based on need. I work in a district that has recently opted to cut 26 reading teachers due to budget shortfall. A loss of additional funding will be catastrophic to the learners of Troy City School District. Eliminating an entire reading program, 26 professionals with direct and crucial student contact, to address a budget deficit, does not solve fiscal problems; it hurts children. In the end, it is the learners in districts like Troy that suffer the most from budget cuts and unfair distribution of Federal Educational aid. Please support our learners and pass funding.*

❖ **Gen Stinson, Kindergarten School 18, Troy Teachers Association**

*Within the Enlarged City School District of Troy, numerous families are already requesting more assistance to deal with the behavioral and mental health needs of their children amid the current crisis. There is little doubt that there will be substantial increases in mental and behavioral health problems for both students and adults when our district reopens the physical buildings. School Psychologists, School Social Workers and School Counselors are serving on the front lines of these realities. These support staff are currently working with teachers and families to figure out how to support students' mental-health needs as we deal with the impact and obvious adverse effects of Covid-19. With the growing demands to support the psychological and emotional well-being of our students, we cannot afford any cuts to the support staff within our buildings. Now more than ever the need for additional funding (not just current levels) is a necessity to support our children, families and staff within the Troy school community.*

❖ **Maxine Brisport, School Psychologist for Enlarged City School District of Troy, Troy Teachers Association**

*At the WSWHE BOCES, our social workers and teachers, teaching assistants and aides are doing a heavy lift to help keep our students safe, fed, engaged, encouraged and listened to. Many are without internet access, some may need a place at times to sleep. These children at times have parents working so they are babysitting for siblings so they can't manage both that & their classwork. Our Spanish teacher is meeting one of our students in a park (socially distancing) several times a week just to help the student complete their assignments because the child needs that one to one assistance that a computer can't do it's about the relationship! With no funds we could lose that wonderful caring teacher. There are stories behind each one of our educators. We can't lose them now, our fragile students in the most unprecedented time need the stability of those trusted individuals. It's late and I ramble but so many nights I lay awake and worry for our students and my heart is heavy with concern for them. If not for our children, then who?*

❖ **Sandie Carner-Shafran, Teaching Assistant Special Education 38 years**

## **MAYORS**

*Without financial assistance from Congress, communities across this country face devastation. It is absolutely critical that emergency aid be provided to local and state governments whose first responders have been on the front lines fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. Lost revenue caused by the economic fallout threatens these critical services that keep us safe. The Heroes Act provides the relief communities need to keep our nation running and I thank Congressman Tonko for his support and advocacy on our behalf.*

### **❖ Schenectady Mayor Gary McCarthy**

*The lost revenues, productivity and added expenses our City is experiencing because of this pandemic are destroying our ability to provide the essential services our citizens need so desperately at this time. The financial assistance for municipalities including Amsterdam that is included in this legislation is absolutely essential. I am grateful that Congressman Tonko understands our plight and is leading the effort to secure resources on our behalf.*

### **❖ Amsterdam Mayor Michael Cinquanti**

*Now more than ever, we cannot afford to allow partisan bitterness to delay the passage of The Heroes Act. State and local governments desperately need assistance from the federal government. To fail to pass such a bill would be devastating to state and local finances. Thank you to Congressman Tonko for his support and for fighting for our local communities.*

### **❖ Saratoga Springs Mayor Meg Kelly**

*Local municipalities like Troy continue to face unanticipated and significant financial losses associated with the COVID-19 emergency, further complicating our ability to maintain critical operations and services for our residents. Failure by Washington to provide federal relief and assistance to state and local governments will have a significant impact on essential services in our community. The HEROES Act is an important step toward securing necessary aid and relief for local governments, and we thank Congressman Tonko for his tireless advocacy on behalf of Troy and the Capital Region.*

### **❖ Troy Mayor Patrick Madden**

*If the federal government refuses to provide direct emergency aid to state and local governments, painful budget cuts will be required to close the shortfall – cuts that would be borne on the backs of our police officers, fire fighters, sanitation workers, laborers, code enforcement officers, and other essential workers who continue to deliver essential city services to our residents. Our city residents and workforce cannot be asked to bear this burden, whether through cuts to essential services, layoffs, or salary reductions. Congressman Tonko deeply understands the challenges faced by our district's municipalities, and I commend him for his support of the HEROES ACT and his continued advocacy and partnership.*

### **❖ Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan**