



Home Healthcare Workers of America

138-50 Queens Blvd, Briarwood, NY 11435 • 718-658-4848 • fax: 718-523-4732 • www.hhwa.care

**Testimony to the U.S. House Select Subcommittee on The Coronavirus Crisis
by Lori Ames, National Secretary-Treasurer,
Home Healthcare Workers of America
June 10, 2020**

Honorable Members of the House, my name is Lori Ames. I am proud to speak on behalf of the Home Healthcare Workers of America (HHWA), and over 20,000 of its home health aides across New York State.

Our members care for elderly and infirm New Yorkers every day in their homes, and over these past months, as COVID-19 devastated our city and our state, our work has helped keep countless thousands out of nursing homes, where the pandemic caused so much destruction, providing some measure of comfort to families.

Every day, home care aides are on the front lines, in people's homes, providing healthcare, other essential work such as shopping, feeding, bathing people who are alone, elderly, physically or mentally disabled, by helping with medication and in many cases companionship.

We have done so throughout the crisis, at great personal risk to ourselves and our families.

- As I offer this testimony to you today, we know that 539 of our members have tested positive for the Coronavirus;
- Another 352 have shown symptoms.
- 475 of our members cannot return to work for coronavirus-related reasons. That is, they fear for their family's health should something dire happen to them, childcare issues, and patients refusing service.
- Sadly, 11 of our members have made the ultimate sacrifice and have perished from this insidious disease.

All these numbers are sure to climb as we continue to gather data from our employers under contract and as this virus rages on.

Not so long ago, members of this august body confronted the tragic aftermath of a different crisis, when first responders and volunteers from New York, Shanksville, PA and the Pentagon and in-fact people living all throughout this nation were becoming sick and dying because of their exposure to the toxins at Ground Zero following 9/11.

At that time, dedicated and compassionate public servants like Congresswoman Maloney, Congressman Nadler, Congressman King, Senators Schumer and Gillibrand and others, came to the aid of those first responders and others who were there, by passing the Zadroga Act, which provided medical care and financial compensation to those sick and injured from the 9/11 attacks.

Our country was in a national crisis then that required a national response, and we are in a similar situation today.

For this reason, I urge you to pass H.R. 6909, The Pandemic Heroes Compensation Act of 2020, sponsored by Chairwoman Maloney, which would recognize and support the many essential workers who have risked their lives during a crisis.

New York was the epicenter of that crisis, and once again, as we confront COVID-19, New York's frontline workers – in this case, medical workers, EMS, home health aides, doctors, nurses and others – are in need of a helping hand, a safety net, should disaster strike.

With COVID-19, the virus knows no borders, and now healthcare workers have been getting sick in Chicago, in New Orleans, in Houston, in Boston, and countless other places where it has and may continue to spread.

The Home Healthcare Workers of America do not want to be left behind. America's frontline workers are dying; they are experiencing critical health conditions threatening their lives.

They have done whatever was required to ensure our society's most vulnerable had access to essential and effective care. Now, we need our Congressional leaders standing by our side.

Home health companies have provided overtime to our aides who are healthy. Many of those who continued to work during the pandemic found themselves having to seek alternate, often more expensive transportation, due to the high risks on the subways and buses. These costs, especially for our members in New York City, adds up significantly over time.

Compensation to those impacted by this crisis can be a vital lifeline.

We also see that an enormous stress has been put on home care agencies to fund the proper PPE for aides, cover travel expenses and even state-mandated COVID-19 sick leave, without any reimbursement from Washington. We believe that agencies must always provide their aides with adequate resources, but at what point does the refusal to reimburse them for these out of pocket expenses also put them out of business?

Home care aides treat their patients like family. Isn't it time that we show them the same respect?

This compensation fund is similar to what was put in place for our 9/11 first responders and will show our essential workers that the government hears them, sees them and acknowledges the vital role they have played during this critical time. And if our members make the ultimate sacrifice and lose their lives their families will not be abandoned.

Thank You.