

Testimony of Louis Mark Carotenuto
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Before the New York City Council
Committee on Civil Service and Labor
In Support of Int. No. 1918-2020 – Premium Pay for Essential Workers
May 5, 2020

Good Afternoon. Thank you Chairman Miller, Speaker Johnson, and members of the City Council. I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of Int. No. 1918-2020, which would guarantee badly needed premium pay for essential workers.

Our union, UFCW Local 2013, represents 14,000 workers across the New York City metropolitan area. The majority of our union members are home health aides, CNAs, warehouse workers and food industry workers. All are especially essential during this time of crisis.

Essential workers such as home health aides are on the frontlines of the COVID crisis. They care for a high-risk population of elderly New Yorkers in assisted living facilities across the city. They are carrying a heavy workload, putting in extra hours since many co-workers are out sick with COVID, risking illness themselves, and shouldering the extra safety work necessary during the crisis. All of this without hazard pay for many of them.

Our warehouse workers and grocery store workers are keeping the economy running and delivering vital services to all New Yorkers. Most are earning subsistence level wages as it is, in this expensive city, while they are putting their own health at risk.

Most of our members are also facing tremendous economic strain with family members out of work, little savings and often facing new costs like buying their own PPE equipment when employers don't provide it.

Our essential workers need and deserve premium pay out of recognition of the vital work they're doing, and to help them weather this crisis. But premium pay should be required of all employers of essential workers – not just those with more than 100 employees. An exemption for employers with fewer than 100 employees would exclude thousands of workers who are performing the same tasks as employees in larger facilities, often times without proper PPE or sufficient staffing. These employees need hazard pay as much as, if not more than, other workers. And in the assisted living home industry, where executives often make in the mid or high six figures, there's no reason they cannot afford to provide extra pay for this essential workforce. We urge the City Council not to leave them out.