

Dear Colleagues,

I want to take this opportunity to update you on the Downstate Chapter's months-long efforts to secure hazard pay for our essential workers.

Before I begin, I want to thank our essential workers for all that they've done and continue to do to care for patients as the pandemic rages on. We will keep working to secure hazard pay for our dedicated members, who in the face of mass sickness and the deaths of hundreds of patients, came to work and did their jobs.

Many left their children in the care of family members to put their lives on the line, working double shifts and extra shifts to care for patients. Far too many of our members contracted COVID-19 while on the job. We mourn the members who passed away after becoming ill.

Even though no state worker has received hazard pay to date, UUP will not stop fighting until we secure hazard pay for our members.

UUP has been advocating for hazard pay since the beginning of the pandemic. I have engaged in conversations on the local level with administration at the campus and the hospital. I have written letters urging them to support and find a way to provide hazard pay to our essential employees.

At the same time, UUP President Fred Kowal has had ongoing conversations with the SUNY administration and the governor's staff about obtaining funding for hazard pay.

In June, UUP statewide leaders joined the Downstate Chapter in a remote meeting with members of Brooklyn Delegation to advocate for hazard pay. Several of our front-line workers were also on the call. During the meeting, Delegation members agreed to work with us to advocate for hazard pay. State Senators Kevin Parker, Zellnor Myrie and Andrew Gounardes took part in the meeting, as did Assemblymembers Joe Lentol, N. Nick Perry, Helene Weinstein, Rodneyse Bichotte, Diana Richardson, JoAnne Simon and Tremaine Wright.

We continue to work with the Brooklyn Delegation members to secure hazard pay for our essential workers. We will not allow hazard pay to become a backburner issue for the Governor, Brooklyn Delegation or Dr. Riley, Downstate's president. We must keep this issue at the forefront.

As you know, our union is actively working with the American Federation of Teachers—which represents members who live in Republican-led states—to push for passage of the HEROES Act, which would include federal dollars to fund hazard pay for essential workers. We are also calling for the creation of a state income tax on billionaires and ultra-millionaires, which would provide funding for SUNY Downstate.

If you haven't already, please take a moment to go to the UUP website and sign petitions calling for the Senate to pass the HEROES Act and for the state to pass a billionaires' tax. [CLICK HERE](#) to support the HEROES Act; [CLICK HERE](#) to support a billionaires' tax.

Please know that we share your frustration over not receiving hazard pay for your heroic efforts. We are committed to continuing the fight for this well-deserved compensation for our members.

In solidarity,

Rowena