



Mario Cilento
President

Terrence L. Melvin
Secretary-Treasurer

March 2, 2023

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the New York State AFL-CIO's 3000 local union affiliates and their 2.5 million members, retirees, and families, I write to ask for your support of **S.569/H.R.1294, the "9/11 Responder and Survivor Health Funding Correction Act of 2023,"** sponsored by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Representative Andrew Garbarino.

Recognizing the continuing health crisis resulting from exposure to 9/11 toxins, Congress created the World Trade Center Health Program to monitor and treat those developing 9/11 illnesses. In 2015, Congress reauthorized the program until 2090 as its need became only more urgent and the program's efficacy undisputed.

Currently the program serves responders and survivors from the World Trade Center and lower Manhattan, the Pentagon, and the Shanksville crash site, who live in every State and 434 out of 435 Congressional Districts.

The 2015 reauthorization imposed yearly spending caps tied to inflation. As a result of costs and program participation outpacing projections, the program faces a funding shortfall in the coming years. Unfortunately, this means care for the Heroes of 9/11, many suffering from 9/11-associated cancers caused by their toxic exposures, is once again in danger.

Although there was a provision in the end of the year Omnibus package that provided one billion dollars to the program, it was not enough to fill the impending deficit over the next ten years, and it did not fix the funding formula for subsequent years.

The "9/11 Responder and Survivor Health Funding Correction Act of 2023" would ensure there is adequate funding for the World Trade Center Health Program to deal with the projected shortfall. It would also address an interpretation by Health and Human Services denying 9/11 responders at the Pentagon and Shanksville who were active-duty DOD military or civilians, along with other Federal employees, from being included in the World Trade Center Health Program.

Finally, this legislation would correct four minor issues in the text of the initial law regarding flexibility in certain program positions, certifications in the program, credentialing providers, and calculating enrollment and time requirements for processing new conditions.

Thank you for your consideration, and should you have any questions, please have your staff contact Ryan Delgado at rdelgado@nysaflcio.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mario Cilento".

Mario Cilento
President

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