

The Frontline Heroes Act

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Endorsements: American Nurses Association (ANA), American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), and American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL)

In Brief: A bill to provide survivor benefits to the families of healthcare workers who pass away from Covid-19 and disability benefits for healthcare workers who are disabled due to complications from Covid-19, among other purposes.

The Need:

- **The Toll on Healthcare Workers:** Due to increased exposure, Healthcare workers experience heightened risk of contracting and dying from Covid-19.
 - As of September 16th, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has reported 156,306 infections and 690 Covid-19 related deaths among healthcare personnel.ⁱ
 - Through obituaries, journalists identified 1,198 deceased healthcare workers due to Covid-19.ⁱⁱ
- **Inadequate Data:** Better data is needed to assess the pandemic's toll on healthcare workers.
 - Only 23% of CDC Covid-19 infection data specifies if the individual was a healthcare worker, likely resulting in a significant underestimate of the impact on healthcare workforce.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Disabling Impacts:** The virus has been linked to long-term, and sometimes disabling, health impacts.
 - Patients have experienced strokes, cardiomyopathy, and acute respiratory distress syndrome, which can lead to longer-term health consequences.^{ivv}
- **Financial Hardship:** Families of deceased healthcare personnel are being denied worker's compensation.
 - Worker's compensation often requires proof that Covid-19 was contracted at work.
 - Other states place Covid-19 in the same category as the flu, which is not covered.^{vi}
 - Some families are even left with their deceased family member's student debt.^{vii}

Bill Summary:

- Creates the Covid-19 Frontline Healthcare Heroes Survivor and Disability Benefit Program to provide the families of healthcare workers who die from Covid-19 with survivor benefits and healthcare workers who are permanently disabled due to Covid-19 complications with disability benefits.
 - Recipients will receive a lump sum of \$365,670 upon approval of their claim, the same amount as the survivor benefits through the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program.
 - Eligible workers include personnel at healthcare facilities, nursing homes, long-term care homes, and emergency medical service providers, including contractors, or the families of such deceased workers.
 - Families will be compensated for any existing student loans not discharged at death.
 - The Department of Justice Civil Division will house the program, including the application and appeals process.
- Directs the CDC to collect data on the infection rate and mortalities of healthcare workers from Covid-19.
- Directs the CDC to study the long-term and disabling health impacts of Covid-19.

This legislation is based off the most successful aspects of existing survivor benefit programs, including the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act Trust Fund and the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program. Please reach out to Mariah Carray (Carray@mail.house.gov) with questions or to cosponsor.

ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2020/aug/11/lost-on-the-frontline-covid-19-coronavirus-us-healthcare-workers-deaths-database>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html>

^{iv} <https://www.vox.com/2020/7/29/21327317/symptoms-of-covid-19-coronavirus-fever-cough-toes-rash-loss-of-taste-smell>

^v <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/news/2020/looking-forward-understanding-long-term-effects-covid-19>

^{vi} <https://khn.org/news/adding-to-covid-stress-families-of-health-workers-fight-for-denied-workers-comp-benefits/>

^{vii} <https://www.nbnews.com/news/us-news/these-medical-workers-are-tackling-coronavirus-they-re-also-saddled-n1182211>