

For Immediate Release
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California Coalition Representing Millions of Workers Seeks Executive Action by Governor Newsom During COVID-19 Crisis

SACRAMENTO—More than 125 organizations say gaps in worker protections desperately need to be filled by Governor Gavin Newsom and the legislature. The urgent action required is [detailed in a letter](#) asking state leaders to protect the health, safety, and economic well-being of workers impacted by the new coronavirus outbreak.

While all Californians are in this crisis together, the millions of workers represented by this coalition need specific action to preserve their economic stability, including:

- Waiving or easing medical certification requirements under California’s paid family and medical leave laws and social insurance programs during this public health emergency;
- Providing adequate emergency funding to ensure the solvency of the State Disability Insurance and Unemployment Insurance Funds and adequate administration of California’s wage replacement programs;
- Expanding California leave laws to ensure coverage for all workers not covered by the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act;
- Increasing duration and wage replacement rates for Unemployment Insurance, Disability Insurance and Paid Family Leave; and
- Protecting workers from discrimination, harassment and retaliation for complying with public health directives

Sandra Diaz, Vice President of SEIU-USWW which represents 40,000 service workers, says the time to act is now. “While we applaud new protections passed quickly

during this crisis, there are workers falling through the cracks. A lack of adequate healthcare and adequate sick leave jeopardizes their health and the health of our communities. We also have Californians who are 60-plus-years-old who must continue to work or risk losing their healthcare and housing, but should be able to stay home because of their increased risk of exposure. These are the critical obstacles we need to overcome in order to flatten the curve at our hospitals” Diaz explains.

In a medical crisis, vulnerable workers or those caring for vulnerable loved ones must be able to self-certify when they need medical or caregiving leave under California’s family and medical leave laws.

Mariko Yoshihara, Policy Director, California Employment Lawyers Association, highlights that during a shelter-in-place order, workers need to know they can abide by directives and keep their jobs: “We don’t want workers risking the well-being of everyone for fear they’ll suffer consequences at work. We’re asking the state to clarify that employees are entitled to retaliation protections in order to comply with public health directives during this state of emergency.”

Jenna Gerry, Senior Staff Attorney, Legal Aid at Work, notes:

“The pandemic has only exposed longstanding problems low-wage workers face every day: gaps in coverage, barriers to access, and lack of awareness of crucial safety-net programs including paid leave and unemployment insurance. We need immediate action from the Governor and state legislature to protect workers and families, both in the short and long term.”

Letter with more than 125 signatories: <https://legalaidatwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-Response-Letter-to-Governor-and-Legislature.pdf>

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