

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs the Healthy Terminals Act

04/29/2021

*Legislation Expands Access to Livable Wages and Affordable Health Care for Newark Liberty International Airport Workers*

**NEWARK** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed the Healthy Terminals Act (S989) which creates new minimum wage and benefits requirements for certain Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) and Newark Liberty International Train Station workers. The legislation will expand access to livable wages and affordable health care for workers at the airport and train station who often cannot afford employer-provided health care plans.

“For a long time, we have heard the concerns and often desperate pleas from airport workers for access to affordable health care and for wages that allow them to support themselves and their families,” said **Governor Murphy**. “This legislation provides workers at Newark Airport the dignity, respect, and treatment that they deserve. These men and women have selflessly been serving through the COVID-19 pandemic as critical infrastructure workers, and I am proud to sign this legislation that will finally provide them with the health care and compensation that they need and have fought for.”

Primary sponsors of S989 include Senators Loretta Weinberg, Linda Greenstein, and Steve Sweeney, and Assembly members Annette Quijano, Daniel Benson, Joseph Egan, and Shanique Speight.

“Workers in every walk of life, seen and unseen, deserve a livable wage, and access to affordable health care,” said **Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg**. “The people who help keep our planes flying and our trains running, and the men and women who make sure our largest airport is clean, safe and functional, are essential in every respect. This legislation recognizes that fact, and makes sure these workers get the quality treatment they need when they need it. When these front-line workers are able to see a doctor and receive proper care while earning a living wage it makes all of us healthier, safer and stronger.”

“The coronavirus pandemic has underscored the need to ensure that every worker, especially those most at risk, including airport workers, have access to affordable healthcare,” said **Senator Linda Greenstein**. “Newark airport is a vital hub for the entire region and the people who keep it functioning properly, especially in times of crisis, unquestionably deserve affordable health care and a fair, living wage.”

“Our dedicated workers at Newark Liberty have without question been among the state’s most resilient and faithful employees throughout the course of the coronavirus pandemic,” said **Senate President Steve Sweeney**. “They deserve to have that work ethic rewarded in these harrowing days by being provided access to quality health care and a living wage. With the signing of this legislation we are reaffirming our commitment to these workers that have been there for our state in good times and bad.”

“Access to affordable health care will ensure Newark Liberty Airport’s frontline workers can safely do their jobs and interact with travelers,” said **Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin**. “The Healthy Terminals Act will finally make it easier for workers to access affordable, quality health insurance. To all of the airline, train and transit workers, thank you for your service and commitment through these challenging times.”

“Before the pandemic, when this bill was introduced, workers needed help,” said **Assemblywoman Annette Quijano**. “It is time we invest in the workforce that makes air travel possible. Winning the Healthy Terminals Act will be a victory for Black and Brown, men and women who have been on the front lines of COVID-19, sanitizing planes, cleaning terminals, securing the airports, handling baggage and mail, and pushing wheelchairs.”

“While airlines are getting billion-dollar bailouts, we cannot forget that airline workers are in greater need during this pandemic,” said **Assemblyman Daniel Benson**. “While wages have increased, access to good, affordable health care continues to be out of reach for many airport workers. This new law will make sure they don’t have to choose between their health and their job.”

“Many of these workers have to choose between healthcare or paying for housing,” said **Assemblyman Joseph Egan**. “No one should have to ignore their personal health in order to afford rent or a mortgage. This law will help people keep a roof over their head and receive proper medical treatment.”

“These employees include security, baggage handlers and many more positions,” said **Assemblywoman Shanique Speight**. “Travelers rely on these employees to help them maneuver through the airport or train station. This law will enhance their ability to afford healthcare, stay healthy, receive treatment if necessary, and keep everyone who passes through safe and healthy as well.”

S989 requires covered airport and train station employees to be paid wage rates that are at least the wages set under the federal prevailing wage law for building service employees. The bill further requires supplemental benefits equal to those designated by the Commissioner of Labor pursuant to determinations made by the General Services Administration under the federal McNamara-O’Hara Service Contract Act of 1965.

The bill provides that, on and after September 1, 2021 and every year thereafter, the prevailing wage rate applicable to a covered employee may not be less than the following:

- any minimum wage rate established through a policy of the Port Authority; and
- an amount of wages or supplements equal to the rate designated by the Commissioner of Labor based on the federal prevailing wage for the geographic region based on federal contracting laws.

“When this bill was introduced, we did not know that we were headed into an unfathomable threat to our lives, our health and our livelihood. COVID-19 hit us hard, making access to healthcare for our members a matter of life or death,” said **Kyle Bragg, President of SEIU 32BJ**. “Passing this law is a major landmark in the long journey to justice that airport workers have traveled. With the signing of the law, we are one step closer towards a fair contract and the conditions all workers at Newark International deserve.”

“Governor Murphy has championed 32BJ members overall, and airport workers especially, since day one. We are glad that our legislature and the Governor recognize that the Healthy Terminals Act makes sense: it’s good for

workers, it's good for passengers, AND it's good for the airlines," said Kevin Brown, Vice President and New Jersey Director for SEIU 32BJ. "When we invest in the workforce that fuels one of New Jersey's largest economies, we have healthier people, and a healthier airport. Making this a reality in New Jersey is a great milestone in the fight for justice and equality."

"Today is a great day for thousands of workers who were hit the hardest by the Covid-19 pandemic. The last year has taught all of us just how important quality healthcare care is, and today these workers and their families can look forward to a future with a much stronger healthcare safety net," said **Unite Here Local 100 Secretary-Treasurer Jose Maldonado**. "I want to thank Governor Murphy for helping to improve the lives of airport workers. I also thank Senator Sweeney and Speaker Coughlin for their leadership in getting this bill passed."

## Governor Phil Murphy

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