



Labor & Employment Issues Client Alert

Pitta LLP
For Clients
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SPEAKER HEASTIE TO NYS CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION: VITAL SERVICES AND WORKERS ON THE LINE

On April 29, 2020 Speaker Carl Heastie and the New York State Assembly Majority sent New York's Congressional delegation a letter stating that they are "struggling to find a path forward" without help from the federal government.

New York is facing a severe budget shortfall caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The New York State Division of Budget released a plan on April 25 that imposes more than \$10 billion in spending cuts to balance the budget. More than \$8.2 billion of the spending cuts will be to local governments, schools and healthcare. In addition to the more than \$10 billion in spending cuts, the Division of Budget's financial plan also imposes a 10 percent state workforce reduction to all state agencies.

The letter from the Assembly Majority stated that "if cuts of this scale become a reality, no element of daily life for most New Yorkers would be left unscathed." The letter goes on to say "unemployment would increase to dramatically over already-intolerable levels. Services to promote general health and well-being would be eliminated. The housing market would grind to a halt."

The letter also notes that New York's tax revenues to the federal government exceed that of most states, however New York "ranks dead last in distribution of federal aid."

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TASKFORCE TO REOPEN SCHOOLS

On April 29, 2020 the New York State Department of Education announced that it will be forming a taskforce to develop ways to safely reopen school buildings. The announcement comes a day after Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a 116-person advisory board to prepare a policy for the state to safely reopen its economy.

Board of Regents Betty Rosa and Interim Commissioner Shannon Tahoe issued a joint press release where they stated "by working together with these partners, we can ensure that our children's educational, developmental and overall wellbeing is considered during this important discussion."

COUNTIES TO RESUME ELECTIVE SURGERIES

Governor Cuomo announced that hospitals in 35 counties will soon be able to resume elective surgeries and procedures if the hospitals meet certain capacity and other requirements.

The Governor will sign an executive order to permit the 35 counties -- most of them upstate -- to perform the elective surgeries if the hospitals have at least 30 percent Intensive Care Units and overall beds available and there is no increase in COVID-19 patients.

The counties that are eligible to resume elective surgeries are: Allegany, Broome, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chenango, Delaware, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Livingston, Madison, Monroe, Niagara, Oneida, Onondaga, Ontario, Orleans, Oswego, Putnam, Saratoga, Schoharie, Schuyler, St. Lawrence, Steuben, Sullivan, Tompkins, Ulster, Wayne, Wyoming and Yates.

NEW YORK CITY WILL OFFER ANTIBODY TESTS TO 150K HEALTH WORKERS AND FIRST RESPONDERS

On April 29, 2020 Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that the city will provide 150,000 COVID-19 antibody tests to healthcare workers and first responders to determine whether they have been infected with COVID-19.

The antibody tests are set to begin next week, and will be provided to doctors, nurses, police officers, correction officers, EMTs and firefighters. The tests will be administered at hospitals, police precincts, fire houses and jails.

Mayor de Blasio cautioned that “there is not yet confidence that having been exposed to” COVID-19 means that they can never get it again and that individuals cannot let their guard down against re-infection.

The Mayor also announced that the city will be bringing in the Department of Defense (“DOD”) to set up a program to treat healthcare workers and first responders for “combat stress” related to the COVID-19 pandemic. One thousand trauma specialists from the DOD will train staff at hospitals and the Fire Department who will then train counselors for the frontline workers.

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