

THE COVID-19 NAIL SALON WORKER RELIEF & RESILIENCE PLATFORM



Nail salon workers have been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. In an industry already marked by widespread wage theft, a lack of health protections and job security – where workers live not only paycheck to paycheck but day to day – the coronavirus pandemic is exacerbating the injustices they have long experienced. Salons are now officially closed, meaning workers are cut off from any income. Many do not have access to adequate health care, paid sick leave, or the social safety net due to immigration status.

Last week we launched the Nail Salon Worker Resilience Fund, to provide some small temporary relief to a limited number of workers, but it should not be left to charity to support workers during this crisis. Here is our COVID-19 Nail Salon Worker Relief and Resilience Platform to address systemic injustices in our economy and society, and to use this moment of crisis to reimagine and transform the nail salon industry and beyond.

ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE

COVID-19 testing and treatment must be free and available to everyone. The nature of their work has put nail salon workers at a high risk for COVID-19 due to their close interaction with clients while doing manicures and pedicures, but many workers do not have access to adequate health care. Our government must make testing and treatment available to everyone, regardless of immigration status or ability to pay, and must ensure that information on the virus is available to immigrant communities in the languages that they speak. More broadly, this crisis has further illustrated the need for universal health coverage for all, and we stand with advocates from across the state to #PassNYHealth.

ACCESS TO THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET

Federal, state and local stimulus funding must be accessible to everyone, regardless of immigration status. Nail salon workers are majority immigrant women, a quarter of whom are single mothers. All nail salons are currently closed, creating an economic crisis for the many workers who are currently ineligible for unemployment insurance due to immigration status. The “public charge” rule has left workers afraid to sign up for life-saving programs that they are currently eligible for, such as SNAP, because it could invalidate their immigration claims. We need a stimulus that puts people first and puts cash in the hand of everyone who needs it, regardless of immigration status.

RELIEF FOR WORKERS

New York City must ensure that small business relief intended for workers goes to workers. NYC has set up the NYC Employee Retention Grant Program and the NYC Small Business Continuity Loan Fund to provide relief for small businesses that are seeing a reduction in revenue due to COVID-19. New York’s nail salon industry consists of predominantly immigrant-owned small businesses that are in desperate need of this relief. However, due to rampant wage theft in the industry, the City must put in place mechanisms to ensure that the relief is actually reaching impacted workers.

RENT SUSPENSION

New York State must #CancelRent. Nail salon workers are currently unable to work and have no source of income. It is incomprehensible that workers, many of whom live not only paycheck-to-paycheck but day-to-day during 'normal' times, would be expected to continue paying rent during this time of crisis. While a moratorium on evictions was a good start, it is unrealistic to expect workers to pay 3 months of rent once the moratorium is over. Commercial rent must also be suspended. Most nail salons are immigrant-owned small businesses, and they need relief too so that this industry has a chance at recovering. We stand with tenants and advocates from across the state to call on the Legislature and Governor to #CancelRent.

IMPROVED WORKER PROTECTIONS

New York State must pass the Nail Salon Accountability Act (S7993/A10042). Once workers are able to return to salons, we must ensure that they are returning to salons that are honoring the worker protections we now understand to be so fundamental to public health. Many workers report that salon owners do not provide them with adequate masks and gloves to protect themselves and their clients, and our recent report found that 86 percent of those who qualified for NYC's paid sick days did not receive the required days. Additionally, the widespread wage theft in the industry, affecting more than 80 percent of workers, at an average of more than \$9,000 per year, means that workers have no cushion of savings for emergencies like the one we are living. The Nail Salon Accountability Act links business licensing with already existing labor and health and safety laws and would raise standards industry-wide. The bill also requires training for salon owners and workers on labor and health and safety laws. It is crucial that workers are aware of their rights and their rights are respected at work, including their right to organize – it is fundamental to public health.

AN END TO EMPLOYEE MISCLASSIFICATION

New York State must address rampant employee misclassification in New York. Before the COVID-19 crisis began, many nail salon workers were being denied basic labor rights such as minimum wage and sick time due to employee misclassification. We continue to stand with the NY DIRECT Coalition in calling on New York State to pass "ABC test" legislation to address rampant employee misclassification across the state.

END THE CRIMINALIZATION OF IMMIGRANTS & STOP THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN DETENTION CENTERS, PRISONS & JAILS

At all levels of government, we must end the criminalization of immigrants and release vulnerable communities from detention centers, prisons, and jails. Prisons, jails, and detention centers are already in the midst of a public health crisis that they cannot handle and that will only continue to grow worse. To start, we must reduce the number of people in prisons, jails, and detention centers, and release those most vulnerable to the disease, particularly the elderly and sick. The federal government must also suspend all immigration enforcement activities. During a pandemic, immigrants should not have to worry about ICE raids tearing apart their families. Furthermore, we see no need for a cruel and inhumane organization like ICE to continue to exist, and we stand with immigrants and advocates in calling to #AbolishICE.

