STATE OF NEW YORK

1034

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 6, 2021

Introduced by Sens. GIANARIS, BENJAMIN, GOUNARDES, JACKSON, MAY, RAMOS, SALAZAR, SANDERS, SAVINO -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Labor

AN ACT to amend the labor law, in relation to preventing occupational exposure to an airborne infectious disease

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The labor law is amended by adding a new section 218-b to read as follows:

§ 218-b. Prevention of occupational exposure to an airborne infectious disease. 1. For purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(a) "Employee" shall mean any person providing labor or services for remuneration for a private entity or business within the state, without regard to an individual's immigration status, and shall include, but not be limited to, part-time workers, independent contractors, domestic workers, home care and personal care workers, day laborers, farmworkers and other temporary and seasonal workers. The term shall also include individuals working for staffing agencies, contractors or subcontractors on behalf of the employer at any individual work site, as well as any individual delivering goods or transporting people at, to or from the work site on behalf of the employer, regardless of whether delivery or transport is conducted by an individual or entity that would otherwise be deemed an employer under this chapter. The term shall not include employees of the state, any political subdivision of the state, a public authority, or any other governmental agency or instrumentality.

(b) "Work site" shall mean any physical space, including a vehicle, that has been designated as the location where work is performed. The term shall include employer-provided housing and employer-provided transportation at, to or from the work site.

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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(c) "Supervisor" or "supervisory employee" shall mean any person who has the authority to direct and control the work performance of other employees, or who has the managerial authority to take corrective action regarding the violation of the law, rules or regulations. This term shall not include any member of a collective bargaining unit.

(d) "Employer" shall mean any person, entity, business, corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or association employing, hiring, or paying for the labor of any individual, whether directly or indirectly, in any occupation, industry, trade, business, or service. The term shall not include the state, any political subdivision of the state, a public authority, or any other governmental agency or instrumentality.

2. The commissioner, in consultation with the department of health, shall create and publish, in both English and Spanish, a model airborne infectious disease exposure prevention standard for all work sites, differentiated by industry, to establish minimum requirements for preventing exposure to airborne infectious diseases in the workplace in order to protect the public. The model infectious disease exposure prevention standard shall take into account the types of risks present at the work site, including the presence of third parties. The commissioner shall determine, in his or her discretion, which languages to publish the standard in addition to English and Spanish based on the number of individuals in the state population that speak each language, the prevalence of certain languages being spoken in particular industries, and any other factor that the commissioner shall deem relevant. Such standard shall include, but not be limited to, establishing requirements on procedures and methods for:

(a) Employee health screenings;

(b) Face coverings;

(c) Required personal protective equipment ("PPE") applicable to each industry for eyes, face, head, and extremities, protective clothing, respiratory devices, and protective shields and barriers, which shall be provided, used, and maintained in a sanitary and reliable condition at the expense of the employer. The standard shall provide for a list of PPE that satisfies the requirements, based on hazard assessments for each industry;

(d) Accessible workplace hand hygiene stations and maintaining healthy hand hygiene, which shall, at minimum, mandate that employers have at least a ninety day supply of hand hygiene materials and that employers provide adequate break times for workers to use handwashing facilities as needed;

(e) Regular cleaning and disinfecting of shared equipment and frequently touched surfaces such as workstations, touchscreens, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs, and all surfaces and washable items in other high-risk areas such as restrooms, dining areas/breakrooms, locker rooms, vehicles and sleeping quarters. Cleaning and disinfecting protocols shall mandate that the employer is responsible for ensuring adequate amounts of cleaning and disinfecting supplies, and select the least toxic products approved by the EPA under EPA List N;

(f) Effective social distancing for employees and consumers or customers including sign postage or markers; increasing physical space between workers at the worksite; limiting capacity of customers or consumers; delivering services remotely or through curbside pick-up; reconfiguring spaces where workers congregate; flexible meeting and travel options; flexible worksites; or implementing flexible work hours such as staggered shifts;

(g) Compliance with mandatory or precautionary orders of isolation or quarantine that have been issued to employees, including the identification and provision of separate and appropriate accommodations for employees who reside in employer-provided housing in a manner consistent with mandatory or precautionary orders of isolation and quarantine that have been issued to employers and employees;

(h) Compliance with applicable engineering controls such as proper air flow, exhaust ventilation, or other special design requirements;

(i) Designation of one or more supervisory employees to enforce compliance with the airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan and any other federal, state, or local guidance related to avoidance of spreading an airborne infectious disease as applicable to employees and third parties such as customers, contractors, and members of the public within the workplace. Non-supervisory line employees shall not bear responsibility for compliance with the requirements of the model policy;

(j) Compliance with any applicable laws, rules, regulations, standards, or guidance on notification to employees and relevant state and local agencies of potential exposure to airborne infectious disease at the work site; and

(k) Verbal review of infectious disease standard, employer policies and employee rights under this section.

3. The model airborne infectious disease exposure prevention standard shall also include anti-retaliation requirements pursuant to subdivision eight of this section. The commissioner, in consultation with the department of health, shall update the model airborne infectious disease exposure prevention standard as necessary provided that the commissioner shall inform employers of the changes.

4. (a) Every employer shall establish an airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan either by adopting the model standard relevant to their industry promulgated pursuant to this section as its airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan or by establishing an alternative plan that equals or exceeds the minimum standards provided by the model standard.

(b) In any circumstance where an alternative airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan is adopted, the employer shall develop such plan pursuant to an agreement with the collective bargaining representative, if any, or with meaningful participation of employees where there is no collective bargaining representative, for all aspects of the plan, and such plan shall be tailored and specific to hazards in the specific industry and work sites of the employer.

5. Every employer shall provide the airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan to his or her employees, in writing in English and in the language identified by each employee as the primary language of such employees upon reopening after a period of closure due to airborne infectious disease and upon hiring. Businesses permitted to operate as of the effective date of this act shall provide such a plan to all employees upon the effective date of this act and upon hiring. When an employee identifies as his or her primary language a language for which a model document is not available from the commissioner, the employer shall comply with this paragraph by providing that employee with an English-language notice.

6. The airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan shall be posted in a visible and prominent location within the worksite. An employer that provides an employee handbook to its employees shall, in addition, include the airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan in its handbook.

7. Each employer shall make the airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan available, upon request, to all employees and independent contractors, employee representatives, collective bargaining representatives, and the commissioner and the commissioner of public health.

8. No employer, or his or her agent, or person acting as or on behalf of a hiring entity, or the officer or agent of any entity, business, corporation, partnership, or limited liability company, shall discriminate, threaten, retaliate against, or take adverse action against any employee for:

(a) Exercising their rights under this section or under the applicable airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan.

(b) Reporting violations of this section or the applicable airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan to any state, local, or federal government entity, public officer or elected official.

(c) Reporting an airborne infectious disease exposure concern to, or seeking assistance or intervention with respect to airborne infectious disease exposure concerns, to their employer, state, local, or federal government entity, public officer or elected official.

(d) Refusing to work where such employee reasonably believes, in good faith, that such work exposes him or her, or other workers or the public, to an unreasonable risk of exposure to an airborne infectious disease due to the existence of working conditions that are inconsistent with laws, rules, policies, orders of any governmental entity, including but not limited to, the minimum standards provided by the model airborne infectious disease exposure prevention standard, provided that the employee, another employee, or employee representative notified the employer of the inconsistent working conditions and the employer failed to cure the conditions or the employer had or should have had reason to know about the inconsistent working conditions and maintained the inconsistent working conditions.

9. Nothing in this section shall be deemed to diminish the rights, privileges, or remedies of any employee under any collective bargaining agreement.

10. (a) If after investigation the commissioner finds that an employer or person has violated any provision of this section, the commissioner may, by an order which shall describe particularly the nature of the violation, assess the employer or person a civil penalty of not less than fifty dollars per day for failure to adopt an airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan, or not less than one thousand dollars nor more than ten thousand dollars for failure to abide by an adopted airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan. Provided, however, that if the commissioner finds that the employer has violated the provisions of this section in the preceding six years, he or she may assess a civil penalty of not less than two hundred dollars per day for failure to adopt an airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan, or not less than one thousand dollars nor more than twenty thousand dollars for failure to abide by an adopted airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan. The commissioner may also order other appropriate relief including enjoining the conduct of any person or employer in addition to any other remedies permitted by this section.

(b) Any employee may bring a civil action seeking injunctive relief in a court of competent jurisdiction against an employer alleged to have violated the airborne infectious disease exposure prevention plan in a manner that creates a substantial probability that death or serious physical harm could result from a condition which exists, or from one or more practices, means, methods, operations or processes which have been

adopted or are in use, by the employer at the work site, unless the employer did not and could not, with the exercise of reasonable diligence, know of the presence of the violation. The court shall have jurisdiction to restrain such violations and to order all appropriate relief, including enjoining the conduct of the employer; awarding costs and reasonable attorneys' fees to the employee; and ordering payment of liquidated damages of no greater than twenty thousand dollars, unless the employer proves a good faith basis to believe that the established health and safety measures were in compliance with the applicable airborne infectious disease standard.

11. The provisions and remedies of paragraph (b) of subdivision one of section two hundred fifteen of this chapter shall be applicable to subdivision eight of this section.

12. Where a violation of this section is alleged to have occurred, the commissioner or attorney general may apply in the name of the people of the state of New York for an order enjoining or restraining the commission or continuance of the alleged unlawful acts. The commissioner, in consultation with the commissioner of health, shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to ensure compliance with this chapter.

13. The commissioner, in consultation with the commissioner of health, shall adopt and amend rules and regulations to effectuate the provisions and purposes of this section.

§ 2. The labor law is amended by adding a new section 27-d to read as follows:

§ 27-d. Workplace safety committees. 1. For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(a) "Employer" shall mean any person, entity, business, corporation, partnership, limited liability company, or an association employing at least ten employees or having an annual payroll of over eight hundred thousand dollars and a workers' compensation experience modification rating of more than 1.20. The term shall not include the state, any political subdivision of the state, a public authority, or any other governmental agency or instrumentality.

(b) "Employee" shall include all employees in the state, except for employees of the state, any political subdivision of the state, a public authority, or any other governmental agency or instrumentality.

2. Employers shall permit employees to establish and administer a joint labor-management workplace safety committee. Each workplace safety committee shall be composed of employee and employer designees, provided at least two-thirds are non-supervisory employees. Employee members of the committee shall be selected by, and from among, non-supervisory employees. Committees shall be co-chaired by a representative of the employer and non-supervisory employees. Where there is a collective bargaining agreement in place, the collective bargaining representative shall be responsible for the selection of employees to serve as members of the committee. Committees representing geographically distinct worksites may also be formed as necessary.

3. No employer shall interfere with the selection of employees who shall serve on such committee or who serve as the workplace safety designee or with such employees' performance of the duties authorized under this section.

4. Each workplace safety committee and workplace safety designee shall be authorized to perform the following tasks, including but not limited to:

(a) Raise health and safety concerns, hazards, complaints and violations to the employer to which the employer must respond.

(b) Review any policy put in place in the workplace required by any provision of this chapter or any provision of the workers' compensation law and provide feedback to such policy in a manner consistent with any provision of law.

(c) Review the adoption of any policy in the workplace in response to any health or safety law, ordinance, rule, regulation, executive order, or other related directive.

(d) Participate in any site visit by any governmental entity responsible for enforcing safety and health standards in a manner consistent with any provision of law.

(e) Review any report filed by the employer related to the health and safety of the workplace in a manner consistent with any provision of law.

(f) Regularly schedule a meeting during work hours at least once a quarter.

5. Employers shall permit safety committee designees to attend a training, without suffering a loss of pay, on the function of worker safety committees, rights established under this section, and an introduction to occupational safety and health.

6. Any employee who participates in the activities or establishment of a workplace safety committee shall not be subject to retaliation for any actions taken pursuant to their participation. Violations of this subdivision shall be deemed to be a violation of paragraph (a) of subdivision one of section two hundred fifteen of this chapter.

7. Nothing in this section shall prevent a collective bargaining agent from negotiating provisions of a collective bargaining agreement in conflict with the provisions of this section; provided, however, any agreement in conflict with this section shall specifically acknowledge the provisions of this section.

8. The department shall adopt and amend rules and regulations to effectuate the provisions and purposes of this section.

§ 3. Severability. If any provision of this act, or the application thereof to any person or circumstances, is held invalid or unconstitutional, that invalidity or unconstitutionality shall not affect other provisions or applications of this act that can be given effect without the invalid or unconstitutional provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this act are severable.

§ 4. This act shall take effect on the thirtieth day after it shall have become a law; provided, however, that section two of this act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after it shall have become a law. Effective immediately, the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implementation of this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and completed on or before such effective date.