

Diana Wilson
Emergency Medical Technician, FDNY
Statement for Briefing on “Heroes of the Coronavirus Crisis: Protecting Front-line and Essential
Workers During the Pandemic
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis
May 21, 2020

To the members of Congress, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak on my experience of working the epicenter of covid-19 in New York, how it affected me personally and my family.

My name is Diana Wilson; I'm an Emergency Medical Technician that has been working for the New York City fire Department for the past 17 years. I'm a mother of two Boys ages 11 and 15, a daughter to a father who has become bedridden due to a stroke and I recently became a widow in 2019; Leaving me to pay for a mortgage on my own.

Graduating from the academy in 2003, I took an oath. To provide prehospital care to those who needs assistance in emergency event.

Becoming an EMT was the beginning of my career and I am currently waiting to be accepted into the paramedic program which is my goal, and one day rise to lieutenant and captain.

Since COVID-19 plagued the city, my life and dreams have been put on pause and with great sacrifice I serve the citizens of New York City. During the early days of this pandemic I've sent my sons to live with loved ones to keep them safe from contracting this deadly virus. It's been 10 weeks since seeing my children.

What I saw in last 6 to 10 weeks was unprecedented chaos. Attempting to drop off patients to maxed capacity Emergency rooms requiring EMT crews to travel longer distances for 911 calls, Doctors informing EMT crews they have no more hospital beds, and stressing they had no more ventilator for patients who required them. EMTs and Paramedics are being mandated for 16 hour shifts leaving us mentally and physically exhausted.

On an EMS shift, we would respond to one or two cardiac arrest. Since COVID-19 has ravaged our state we are now responding to calls by 6 to 10 cardiac arrest in an 8 hour tour. Despite's our best efforts to saves lives, we are finding patients dead in their homes and sometimes even their cars.

This pandemic is dire, we are doing our best to combat this invisible enemy and to do so we need the proper safety equipment. In order to make good on our Oaths as EMTs and Paramedics, we need to be provided with Personal Protective equipment to protect ourselves.

Coming to work not knowing if I was going to be provided a medical N95 mask was not only extremely stressful, it endangers our families. I want to be clear of who we are, we are EMTs, We are Paramedics, We are First Responders...First! Responders! We are the first to enter a patient's home that is suspected to have COVID-19, while firefighters and police officers secure a perimeter. We treat our patients with dignity, provide medical attention and reassured family members that we would take care of their love ones.

We train for Ebola, we train for active shooter scenarios, yet we failed on a plan or train for a pandemic of any scale. There were other countries who had a strategy to respond to this type of scenario and we were grossly unprepared.

New York City is one of the main hubs for international travel, if we only had the information and the preparedness that we needed like all the other training that is federally funded we could have saved more lives.

We are fighting an invisible enemy that has killed thousands of my fellow New Yorkers and Americans across the country. Let us remember how EMTs and paramedics during 9/11 affected our department. Remember how members were told the the air quality was safe and still experiencing staff dying till this very day. Fast Forward to today....Responding First to this virus... When will EMS get the PPE we need to protect ourselves and save lives? When will EMS get the pay they deserve for being Medical First responders? When and how will Hazard pay reach us?

The Government failed us by NOT protecting First Responders by providing us with a plan and PPE. We are haunted by our choices and the patients we could not save. Behind the mask and uniforms, we are people that have families, financial responsibilities, and a civic duty. As we try to get a hold on longer shifts, we have now transitioned to 12-hour tours. This should have been implemented when the call volume reached 7000; we are stressed and over worked for the better of 10 weeks.

Let us put our political differences aside and together make a step in the right Direction. Pledge to support EMT's and Paramedics , get first responders the PPE they need, and the financial backing they require to not only save lives but live them. Provide the adequate pay to our EMTs and paramedics!!! When no else would, the essential First Responders did.... Thank you