

**Prepared Testimony for Senator Gillibrand
9/11 Health and Victims Compensation Bill
Tuesday, June 29**

Thank you very much, Chairman Harkin and Senator Enzi, for convening this hearing. I am incredibly grateful that you have taken the time to bring the committee together to discuss this incredibly important issue and my legislation to provide health treatment and victim's compensation to the affected first responders and survivors of September 11th.

Thank you to our witnesses **Dr. John Howard** -Director, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Service, **Dr. Jim Melius**, Administrator of the New York State Laborers' Health and Safety Trust Fund and Chair of the Steering Committee for the WTC Medical Monitoring and Steering Program, **Dr. David Prezant**, Chief Medical Officer, Fire Department of New York City, Office of Medical Affairs, **Lt. Martin Fullam**, firefighter, Fire Department of New York City, and **Margrily Garcia**, a patient at the World Trade Center Environmental Health Center, for providing testimony today on this bill.

I hope we can all agree that we as a nation have an undeniable moral obligation to provide treatment for individuals who are sick and dying because of the terror attacks at Ground Zero. The responders and survivors living in the area were told by the Federal Government that the area was safe. They removed debris and recovered victims with little to no safety equipment to protect their lungs from the toxic ash that invaded Ground Zero for months. They tried to return to their normal lives because that was what our nation asked of them to do.

Now years later tens of thousands of these Americans are sick and dozens perhaps hundreds are dying. Just this week, I spent time with parents who had children enrolled in day cares in the area. These children are now suffering from horrible asthmatic conditions and could experience other horrible health effects that we have only begun to discover.

This is a tragedy and our failure as a nation to confront it is an outrage.

My legislation would fulfill our moral obligation to the heroes who have sacrificed their lives for our country and all the victims who are dying from the worst terrorist attack in our history by creating a fully transparent system that establishes a long-term health program with proper oversight and accountability.

My legislation would create a fully transparent system that establishes a long-term health program that our heroes and community survivors can rely on.

- It would terminate the six billing systems created in the chaotic aftermath of September 11th and establish a third party administrator, who will set reasonable rates, track expenditures and enforce eligibility requirements.
- The legislation would require an annual program report to Congress. And 3 years after enactment, the Government Accountability Office would be required to report to Congress on the cost of the program.
- This bill would create the needed statutory infrastructure to fulfill our moral obligation with a program that is efficient, effective, and diligent with taxpayer funds.
- My legislation also tightens the eligibility criteria that an individual has to meet to be covered by this program.
 - There are specific times that a responder or community survivor would have had to have been in lower Manhattan.
Individuals would only receive assistance if they are diagnosed with a condition from the list of covered ailments, such as Chronic Respiratory Disorder, interstitial lung disease, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
 - A physician with experience in WTC-related diseases would have to make the determination that the disease is related to exposure on or in the aftermath of 9/11.
 - These eligibility guidelines ensure that all who were exposed to the toxic cloud are able to receive the medical treatment they require. Those eligible are not just responders, but also community survivors who lived, worked, or attend school in the affected area.

I would like to submit more than a dozen letters of support from Members of Congress, elected officials, local community organizations, businesses, labor, and others from New York City and across the country that are asking the Senate to move forward on this important bill.

As we debate this bill, let us think about the lives of these heroes – the thousands of survivors living and working in the area and the tens of thousands of responders that came from every single congressional district in the country to serve our nation. Listen to the stories of **Lt. Martin Fullam** and **Margrily Garcia**, who you will hear from today.

We must establish efficient programs to provide for their care and treatment, and fulfill our moral obligation to these heroes.

The horrific damage of 9/11 did not end when those buildings came down. For thousands of Americans, the horror and the pain began weeks, months and sometimes years later. We must never forget the way these men and women have sacrificed for our country.

Thank you and I look forward to answering any of your questions about my legislation and hearing from the expert witnesses today.