



COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRATS
ENERGY & COMMERCE
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

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**Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr., as prepared for delivery
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “Examining H.R. 1786, the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and
Compensation Reauthorization Act”**

Thank you Chairmen Pitts and Upton for calling today’s hearing. This is a critical first step in ensuring that the 9/11 Health program is extended as soon as possible. As you both already know, this is one of my top priorities for 2015, and I’m grateful for your willingness to work with me to ensure its timely passage.

Before I get started, I have to recognize all the first responders who are here and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude. I also want to acknowledge Dr. Iris Udasin, who I’ve known for many years, who runs New Jersey’s 9/11 Health Clinic. Thank you for being here to share your expertise and experience with us today.

Lastly, let me recognize Reps. Maloney, Nadler, and King from New York, who have joined the Committee today, as well as our Members Reps. Engel and Clarke. Since day one you have all fought tirelessly to ensure that our nation’s 9/11 responders and survivors are cared for. I’m proud to fight alongside you.

Beyond the immediate loss of life of 9/11, we now know, with great documentation, that thousands of first responders and survivors of the attacks are now suffering debilitating illnesses from its aftermath. In fact, more than 100 firefighters and 50 law enforcement officers have reportedly lost their lives to WTC-related health conditions. Additionally, more than 1500 active duty firefighters and EMS personnel and over 550 law enforcement officers were forced to retire due to WTC-related health conditions.

We now have a deep understanding of how the tons of dust, glass fragments and other toxins released into the air affected both responders and survivors. Illnesses include respiratory diseases, gastro-esophageal disorders, mental health conditions, and cancer.

That is why the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, signed into law in 2011, is so critical. It established a program to monitor and screen eligible responders and survivors and provides medical treatment to those who are suffering from World Trade Center related diseases.

But what is so important to note, is that this program isn't there to provide health insurance. These are complicated conditions that are chronic in nature and require special expertise to appropriately diagnose and treat. That is why the program includes a network of clinics and providers specially trained to treat these diseases. It also ensures that providers and survivors bear no out of pocket costs associated with these particular health conditions.

The WTC health program currently provides monitoring and treatment services for more than 71,000 responders and survivors. They reside in every state and in 429 of the 435 Congressional Districts.

If some of you don't know, the law is named for James Zadroga, a New Jersey hero who responded on 9/11 and spent hundreds of hours digging through World Trade Center debris. Mr. Zadroga died in 2006 from pulmonary disease and respiratory failure after his exposure to toxic dust at the World Trade Center site.

Like him, thousands of people, from all across this country, came to the aid of our country and helped others at Ground Zero. Those responders and survivors should not be abandoned. I hope we can extend the WTC health program without delay.

I yield the remainder of my time to Rep. Engel.

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