

Testimony to House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform
“No Worker Left Behind: Supporting Essential Workers”
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Widow of Ed Bacote, Essential Hospital Worker and 1199SEIU Union Delegate

My name is Eneida Becote. I work at Weill-Cornell Medical Center in New York City in Pediatric Administration. I live in Queens with my sons Joshua and Branden.

I'm here today to tell you about my family and how we lost our guiding light, my husband Ed, to COVID on April 9. I'm also here to speak on behalf of all the families left behind, so that you, our elected representatives, know how important it is that you pass the Pandemic Heroes Compensation Act to help the families of essential workers who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country as America was engulfed in the pandemic.

First, let me tell you about my husband Ed. Ed was one of the strongest, kindest, most dedicated, and most loving people I have ever known. We met at Brooklyn Hospital Medical Center, where he was employed until the day he died. Ed was an incredible father and a loving husband.

He was just as dedicated to the patients, who he served as a transporter for over 20 years. Ed wasn't the kind of guy who saw his job as just getting a hospital patient from one place to another; he felt responsible for his patients and made sure to give every one of them the same level of care and attention that any one of us would want for our family members. He loved to tell jokes and had a smile that would light up a room. He used that gift to make his patients feel comfortable as he was taking them to surgery or for tests, knowing the kind of stress and anxiety that they must be feeling at those moments.

He was also a loyal co-worker and was truly devoted to the healthcare workers of Brooklyn Hospital, serving them as an 1199SEIU union delegate. He believed that everyone deserved to be treated fairly and with dignity. He believed that treating caregivers with respect was a vital part of providing good patient care in any healthcare setting. I used to tell him that he should have been a lawyer. He truly loved being an advocate and brought a passion to the work that was an inspiration and example for others.

We lost Ed on April 9, after he had been hospitalized with COVID for nearly three weeks. Over a matter of days, my strong, robust, energetic husband went from having a fever to being on a ventilator in the Intensive Care Unit. I will never forget the day I got the call that he coded. My and my sons' world changed forever.

Ed was a big presence in our lives. He was our guide and our protector. He was a devoted Steelers fan, football coach and a best friend. He was a rock. I pray that I can make it through the days without him and every morning I wonder how the sun is coming up and he is not here with us.

Ed was also my partner. Together, we were raising our family and building our life. We worked hard to build our dreams and give our children the things we never had. Now, not only have I lost my best friend, but I've also lost the man who worked alongside me for 23 years building our American Dream.

I urge you to pass this bill not just for the Becote Family, but for the tens of thousands of other families like us who not only lost their loved ones to this cruel virus but lost the loved ones who gave so much to protect all of us.

In addition to supporting the families left behind, we can honor heroes like my husband by doing everything we can to stop the spread of coronavirus. We need to ensure that testing is widely available and much earlier. My husband didn't get tested until his symptoms were severe enough to put him into the ICU and onto a ventilator.

We also need to ensure that EVERY healthcare worker gets the hazard pay they so rightly deserve and has access to the personal protective equipment that can help save their lives. Over these last few months, so many of the essential workers who play crucial roles in our healthcare system have gone unacknowledged. Food service workers, clerks, housekeepers, or patient transporters like my husband – the best way we as a nation can show them our gratitude is to make sure they remain safe and healthy and able to return home to the families they work so hard to support.

Our family members made the ultimate sacrifice. Help us honor their memories by protecting the families they left behind so we may go on to help others build their own American Dreams.