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## **SUPPORT**

# **Bill to Promote Language Access in Workers' Compensation Courts**

June 14, 2017  
A6043 - Moya  
S5356 - Alcantara

MFY Legal Services, Inc. (MFY) (soon to be Mobilization for Justice) fully supports A6043/S5356, which would provide language access services throughout the New York State Workers' Compensation System. The Bill codifies Executive Order 26, which requires state agencies to provide interpretation to those who require it in order to use services provided by the agency and to take other steps to meet the needs of New Yorkers with limited English proficiency.

MFY envisions a society in which there is equal justice for all. Our mission is to achieve social justice, prioritizing the needs of people who are low-income, disenfranchised or have disabilities. We do this through providing the highest quality direct civil legal assistance, providing community education, entering into partnerships, engaging in policy advocacy, and bringing impact litigation. We assist more than 20,000 New Yorkers each year. Specifically, MFY's Workplace Justice Project advocates on behalf of low-income workers most vulnerable to exploitation. MFY launched its Workplace Safety and Health Project to help low-wage workers navigate New York's Workers' Compensation System.

According to a recent report by the National Center for Law and Economic Justice (NCLEJ) and the Worker Protection Coalition, the New York State Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) fails to adequately protect the rights of injured or ill workers to ensure they understand and are able to participate in hearings to determine their benefit. The report finds that the WCB provides incomplete and low-quality interpretation, and in many cases no interpretation at all, and sheds light on the extent of language access issues for non-English speaking injured workers in New York State.

A key finding of the report is that the WCB fails to provide any interpretation at all in more than 40% of hearings where the worker requires interpretation. The report further finds that even when the WCB provides interpretation, it is only for portions of the hearing, and the WCB never provides interpretation for the entirety of a hearing. Further, the report finds that when the WCB does provide interpretation, it is through telephonic services that do not adequately interpret

complex hearings for injured or ill workers. The bill would ensure that workers are provided the interpretation that they so critically need.

MFY urges members of the Assembly and Senate to support this legislation.

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