

Coronavirus Raises Workplace Issues

PS&H employment Partner and Chair of the Labor & Employment Group, Alicia Samolis, provided comment to the *Providence Business News* (PBN) on the challenges employers are facing in balancing coronavirus concerns with the risk of unintentionally creating stigma and discrimination.

In their recent article on how the coronavirus is impacting employers, the PBN referred to guidance distributed by the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Alicia explained that employers will have “wide latitude in sending employees home who seem to be ill if the CDC declared the COVID-19 virus a pandemic.” As of early March, Alicia said the CDC had not yet declared the coronavirus a pandemic.

Despite that, she was advising clients that they could send an employee home – without pay if they are hourly workers and have exhausted state-allowed sick leave – with the caveat there would be a small risk of a “regarded as” discrimination claim.

But she warned employers that they should not ask to take their employees’ temperatures, which would only be allowed if a “severe” outbreak were declared locally. Even then, doing so might violate people’s rights.

Alicia counseled that the coronavirus has raised numerous legal questions for local employers.

[Click here to read the full article.](#) (Subscription required.)

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