



**DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
AT CATHOLIC CHARITIES**

Paola Martinez

"I shouldn't have to choose between my health and my rhythm."

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Paola contracted COVID-19 at the beginning of the pandemic helping a senior citizen who, unfortunately, didn't know that he had COVID-19. Her mother, who lives with Paola, also contracted COVID-19 and as a result, Paola had to send her son to live with other family members for his care and safety. Once healed, Paola didn't skip a beat getting back to work, coordinating outreach efforts for families in need, but had to make the difficult decision to be separated from her son until things felt safer.

"He wasn't with me for a couple of months, but I am lucky that at 10, he was able to understand everything that was going on. I am also lucky that we were able to do that," says Paola. "We live in an apartment in New York City. We don't live in a big house where someone can stay on the second floor, or quarantine in the basement or wherever. We don't have that luxury. So, I'm glad he could stay with his other grandma."

At work, Paola's tasks intensified as more people required social services during the pandemic, but she delivered with safety as a top priority. While off the clock, she continued working on her dance and singing skills virtually.

When it came time to get vaccinated, Paola's Aunt told her to wait, thinking the antibodies from getting COVID-19 would protect her. However, after educating herself on the vaccine, Paola immediately lent her arm to the cause. Now she's ready to spend time with her son at home, continue to serve her community, and get back on the dance floor.

Getting [vaccinated](#) is how we beat COVID-19 together.