

# Municipal Labor Committee

55 Water Street, 23<sup>rd</sup> Floor / New York, NY 10041 / (212) 815-1474

August 12, 2021

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City Hall  
New York, New York 10007

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City of New York  
City Hall  
New York, New York 10007

Hon. Renee Campion  
Commissioner  
New York City Office of Labor Relations  
22 Cortlandt St.  
New York, NY 10007

Dear All:

I write to express the severe concern—and great disappointment—of the MLC Union leaders on the lack of progress in arriving at a negotiated program to implement the City's vaccine/testing policy.

Several weeks ago, the City announced, without prior consultation or bargaining with the Unions, a policy that would require public employees either to be vaccinated or be tested weekly to avoid suspension without pay. Despite this unilateral action, with an eye towards the unfortunate advance of the Delta variant, the MLC's officers agreed to meet and discuss the proposed policy with you and numerous other key City officials on July 28<sup>th</sup>. The tenor of the discussion, we thought, was the City's desire to work collaboratively with the Unions to navigate a path towards achieving the objectives of the policy.

City leadership collectively asked the Union leaders to provide proposals and raise concerns, which we did. Primary among those concerns was the major logistical hurdle of providing timely and accessible testing to the likely 100,000 City workers who, despite the encouragement of many (including Union leaders), would opt out of vaccination for medical, religious and other reasons. This major dilemma, the Unions warned, would exist even if the policy was successful in encouraging a significant portion of the currently unvaccinated employees to vaccinate.

The MLC officers cautioned that logistics take time to work out, would necessarily be agency specific in places and that, without proper planning, the City would be in a position of having to order so many employees home without pay that there would be insufficient staffing to carry out the duties required to appropriately provide services to the residents of the City. We also raised fundamental questions, including, with regard to testing, whether it would be performed at the work site and on work time, and if not, where testing would be available and how workers would be compensated for complying with the mandated policy.

The discussion concluded on a hopeful note with the City agreeing to take back many of the comments, concerns and suggestions for consideration and to continue the discussions with the Unions. *That was two weeks ago.* While there have been sporadic discussions with some, MLC inquiries regarding these essential matters have essentially gone unanswered. This is unacceptable.

The MLC and its leaders have been firm and consistent that while the Unions support encouraging vaccination (and have made considerable efforts on their own to encourage their members to vaccinate), they will not abdicate their legal right and responsibility to protect the rights of workers to opt for either vaccination or testing, to be held harmless for both the time and cost of testing and vaccination, and to have a fair process for any form of discipline. Make no mistake, despite calling this a vaccination policy, the City's proposal creates a new criterion and process for discipline that would allow agencies to suspend workers without pay and without the typical forms of due process provided for under collective bargaining agreements and law.

Accordingly, we seek a prompt meeting to continue this vital discussion. In the meantime, no policy should be implemented before it is negotiated.

Sincerely,

*Harry Nespoli*

Harry Nespoli  
Chair

cc: Henry Garrido  
Co-Chair  
District Council 37

Michael Mulgrew  
Executive Vice Chair  
United Federation of Teachers

Gregory Floyd  
Secretary  
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Mark Cannizzaro  
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