

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR
OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE STATE OF LABOR DURING COVID-19
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2021, 10:00 AM

Thank you, Chair Miller and members of the Committee on Civil Service and Labor for convening this hearing. My name is Steven Banks and I serve as the First Deputy Commissioner & General Counsel at The New York City Office of Labor Relations, and I am happy to discuss the City's outreach and collaboration with its municipal labor unions during the last 10+ months of this global pandemic. I am also joined today by my colleagues Executive Deputy Commissioner Dawn Pinnock and Executive Deputy Commissioner Quintin Haynes from DCAS, and DCWP Executive Director of External Affairs Steven Ettannani.

In my view, OLR's role as the central oversight agency in dealing with unions is never more important than in a crisis or emergency.

We initially convened a meeting with the Municipal Labor Committee on February 20th, 2020, where health professionals briefed all of the City's labor unions on the science related to COVID-19 and answered questions for several hours. In general, we try to involve our labor unions as early as often as possible, since they serve as the representatives for our over 300,000 City employees. This initial meeting was well before the City felt the full effects of the virus, and was meant to educate the union representatives so that they could educate their members.

As the virus fully took hold in March, the City for the first time established a telework policy which led to many of our City workers who could perform their work from home to do so. As an example, the Office of Labor Relations has about 150 employees and we closed our offices on March 20 and remain working remotely through today.

The City also established a leave policy for City employees to ensure that those affected by COVID-19 would receive excused time off without charging leave balances. That policy has been updated several times and remains in place. The categories of those eligible include those with symptoms of COVID-19, subject to a governmental or medical quarantine, caring for an individual subject to a governmental or medical quarantine, or caring for a child whose school has been closed.

In each of these situations, OLR has engaged with affected labor unions and provided copies of the relevant policies and answered questions that have arisen. We recognize that each bargaining unit within the City workforce is truly unique in the role that they play within City government; our goal is to reduce disparities by treating each union and each employee in a fair and equitable manner while taking account of those differences.

In the spring of 2020, a major issue we were dealing with our labor partners on was the health and safety protocols for those employees who were continuing to report to work. This included cleaning protocols and the provision of personal protective equipment. At that time the City was

able to procure large supplies of masks and gloves, and other needed equipment like additional laptops for those working at home.

We also worked with labor unions as some municipal employees were moved to functions and agencies that had the most acute need, such as school nurses temporarily moving to Health + Hospitals. While there are inevitable areas of disagreement between labor and management, our approach throughout this pandemic has been to engage our unions and work through these issues collaboratively rather than moving forward unilaterally.

As we transitioned into the summer of 2020, the City issued a Return to the Office Guidance, which was meant to educate agencies and provide consistent Citywide protocols to be implemented where applicable. As certain groups of employees returned to in-person assignments, OLR worked with agencies to ensure that they were notifying union representatives of changes in work location. In many instances union and management representatives held walkthroughs at worksites so that the union could observe firsthand that social distancing and other protocols were being adhered to. We've also worked with both unions and healthcare providers to ensure that City employees have access to COVID-19 tests, and worked with DOE and labor unions on protocols for mandatory testing for employees who work in schools.

Most recently, our work and outreach has been most focused on the distribution of the vaccine. OLR staff is present daily at the City's Vaccine Command Center, so that if any issues arise that require coordination with labor unions, we are aware and able to immediately effectuate that. The Vaccine Command Center staff is working with State officials daily to interpret and expand the definition of City employees eligible to be vaccinated under the current phase 1(b). Earlier this month, we along with Deputy Mayors Wolfe, Fuleihan, and Hartzog again briefed the MLC steering committee on the City's vaccination efforts, again to involve labor in the discussion and make sure the unions have access to the latest and most accurate information.

In support of the vaccination effort, the City recently issued a policy which allows for City employees to receive excused time during the workday to receive the vaccine, and also provides for 3 hours of compensatory time to any employee who receives both doses. We also specifically added vaccine side effects to the list of reasons for employees getting the COVID-19 excused leave I discussed earlier. We have also taken steps to educate our workforce about the vaccine. VCC has hosted 5 tele-town halls for City employees, with Dr. Jay Varma providing general information about the vaccine and answering questions that employees submit. We plan to continue our education efforts so we can address concerns some employees may have and encourage as much of our workforce to get vaccinated as possible. This is all an effort to make sure that employees are supported in making the decision to receive the vaccine.

We truly believe that labor unions are our partners, and work every day at cultivating the relationships and working together with organized labor. Thank you again for holding a hearing on this important topic.

Statement of Mark Henry, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) President/Business Agent, ATU Local 1056 to NYC Council Committee on Civil Service & Labor on the State of Labor During the COVID-19 Pandemic, January 27, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Miller and colleagues on the City Council for this opportunity to present on behalf of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1056 and our sister ATU Locals 726, 1179 and 1181. I am Mark Henry, President/Business Agent of the local and chair of the ATU NYS Legislative Conference Board. Including New York City, ATU represents more than 25,000 hard-working transit workers across New York State; other ATU cities include Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse.

ATU appreciate this opportunity to emphasize the special plight of our transit workers on the frontlines of the fight against COVID-19. The impact of COVID-19 certainly impacts our civil servants in public transit; this includes the members of ATU Local Locals 1056 and 1179 in Queens, Local 726 in Staten Island, and Local 1181 in Brooklyn – and the riding public. Local 1056 members operate and maintain NYC Transit bus routes serving Queens with some routes extending into The Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan. As we have testified previously, ATU members work under an expired contract that the MTA **REFUSES** to update. The MTA already settled a new contract including new wages for the workers represented by TWU Local 100; this created two classes of workers paid differently to perform the same work. Many of the legislators present today and others flagged this inequity to the MTA and we thank you.

ATU recognizes, as do most experts, that, without a fully functioning transit system, we cannot expect New York City's – and thus our state and national – economy to fully recover and achieve growth beyond. This includes treating all workers fairly and equitable. All who perform the same work must receive the same pay and not be treated as part of some caste. ATU workers deserve a contract for the same work as those the MTA already settled with and refuses to discuss with ATU.

Our members were classified as essential employees and continued to work in order to make sure other essential workers, including doctors, nurses, police, grocery store clerks and others, can get to their jobs and return home to their families. The work of our members has put them at an increased high risk of exposure to the coronavirus. This exposure has not been without consequences. In New York, ATU locals have lost 33 of our brothers and sisters to COVID-19; they put their lives on the line as essential workers during this crisis. And our members perform their jobs in an exemplary manner despite the MTA treating them as second-class workers without the same compensation afforded other brothers and sisters at Local 100 working at the MTA under a new contract.

Transit Workers are unable to shelter in place. We require a workplace that provides the minimum “at home” shelter or better “shelter” at the workplace. Transit workers are exposed to all dangers and still have shown great resiliency mentally and physically under uncertain conditions despite the MTA treating them as second-class workers without the same compensation afforded other brothers and sisters at Local 100 working at the MTA under a new contract.

The priority of the ATU has been to protect the health and safety of our members who are essential workers on the frontline of this crisis. At the start of this crisis, our members were put in harm's way without proper protection. Our workers were not given the personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks, gloves and cleaning supplies, necessary to prevent transmission of this virus.

It was their unions that supplied those basic and mandatory items to our MTA bus operators and maintainers. While our members have better but limited access to PPE now, the delay in getting this equipment was too significant. We must ensure that the MTA has access to and supplies PPE equipment to its workers on the frontlines. We must also ensure that the MTA sets mandatory standards for PPE for transit workers and for cleaning buses and transit stations. These standards need not only apply to the situation today but also apply going forward; doing so ensures we are not as ill-prepared for a situation like this in the future. And our members continue to put themselves at risk while the MTA treats them as second-class workers without the same compensation afforded other brothers and sisters at Local 100 working at the MTA under a new contract.

Our members show up to work despite real threats to their health and safety. We believe that our members should be compensated for their work through the implementation of hazard pay, which would be 1.5 times their normal wage rate. Funding already provided from the federal government should also have allocated to the membership. The hardworking men and women came to work and ensured that other essential workers could get to where they needed to go. Their dedication and hard work must be recognized and never marginalized.

ATU also emphasizes that any cuts to bus and subway service puts the public at risk. Crowded buses and subway to get essential workers and others required to reach their places of work, without the ability to work remotely place these workers in harm's way. Nothing gets gained by putting working people at risk and straining our health care services; just plain penny wise and dollar foolish.

We know that all of these initiatives will require more funding, and we also know that financial situation facing the State right now is dire. Through ATU International, we strongly support the inclusion of \$32 billion in emergency operating aid for public transportation in the next round of federal Coronavirus relief funding. These funds would be used to maintain essential service, avoid layoffs, and to purchase PPE to keep our members safe.

We also support funding for state and localities because in addition to the emergency aid, we know that funding is needed to shore up the support we receive from the State and the City. We must avert the simply devastating cuts to public transportation being contemplated absent additional funding.

We cannot cut public transportation services during this economic downturn or this pandemic. Too many people rely on our services to get to and from work and to and from doctors' appointments, the grocery store and other essential services.

COVID-19 has shown all the economic pitfalls and adverse impacts of cost-cutting over past years on programs that never should have been reduced or eliminated in a city this size. But it does not shine attention on public servants delivering public transit as second-class workers without the same compensation afforded other brothers and sisters at Local 100 working at the MTA under a new contract.

The lack of financial support from the past federal administration impacted our ability to finalize a contract for our members with the MTA. For decades, pattern bargaining at the MTA resulted in the members of the ATU receiving the same benefits negotiated between the TWU and the MTA. This year, the MTA refuses to honor this pattern bargaining. Settling our contracts collectively involves very little impact on the MTA overall operating budget. We need to ensure that the MTA receives adequate funding so they can honor their contractual obligations.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on the State of Labor During the COVID-19 Pandemic. At the MTA, we certainly need a protected, safe and healthy workforce and workplace to provide levels of service needed to assure the riding public, they can safely return to work via public transit.

Similarly, all workers must be afforded workplace safety in the face of this severe and often deadly epidemic. First hand we know the impact on public transportation and our members has been significant, and thus the risk to those who labor in other workplaces and settings.

I appreciate you holding this hearing to hear from those directly impacted.

I am happy to serve as a resource and offer advice and guidance on this and other issues as we move forward.

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Testimony of Dalvanie Powell, President
UPOA – United Probation Officers Association
State of Labor During Covid-19

Committee on Civil Service and Labor
Wednesday January 27, 2021 at 10:00 AM

Dear Chairperson Miller, and all members of the Labor Committee,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today regarding the impact COVID-19 has had on our members.

Under normal circumstances, Probation Officers' work is challenging. COVID-19 has made the situation even more challenging. Our members work seven days a week to guarantee public safety. The members of the United Probation Officers Association in Adult and Family Services since COVID-19 hit persevered despite the safety and health challenges they faced, as they never stopped performing their core central functions and continued to provide vital services and resources to the probation clients and the community at large.

Public safety is our primary focus. With that said, the members of UPOA continue to make field visits, in some cases working side-by-side with NYPD, FBI, U.S. Marshal officers, and other law enforcement brothers and sisters who salaries and pensions are better than ours. Our frontline Officers continue to conduct intakes and prepare investigation as well other reports for the courts. The **Supervision** Officers' virtual contacts with the probation clients have been enhanced. Although we are trying to work more effectively and efficiently remotely, many of the members are not properly equipped with department cell phones and laptops, which means they have to report to the office more often to get their work done ,which unnecessarily puts our members at a greater risk .Nor do we have the appropriate vehicles that other law enforcement agencies are provided as our vehicles are compact and they're not equipped with partitions.

When we were ordered by the Mayor's Office to monitor a group of inmates from Rikers Island in hopes of decreasing the spread of the virus among the staff and inmates on Rikers Island, the Department of Probation administration with the consent of this union re-instituted the electronic monitoring (EM) program. The EM unit has also been beneficial to our probation clients; it gives those adult probation clients who are in violation status or are not in compliance the ability to remain in the community and receive services while being closely monitored—24 hours a day, 7 days a week—instead of being placed in custody and being put at risk to infection from the virus. However, the Officers who are assigned to this unit are the ones who risk their lives by going to homes and shelters to place the monitoring devices on the individuals and setting up the equipment, and they are the first to be present in the event that there is an alert, or if they suspect the device has been tampered with.

In addition, the members of UPOA have gone beyond their call of duty by working at the DOP NEON (Neighborhood Opportunity network) sites, making sure those in need are supplied with food and, if need be, clothing. During the holidays, my members delivered turkeys to the homes of their probation clients and brought joy to many families.

Two or three times during the year the Officers partake in one of the many DOP intervention programs known as Youth Wrap, where they work along the youth and young adults who are on probation. Despite the pandemic, the Officers are committed and continue to mentor these groups.

To our understanding, the Department has been supplying PPE. But when COVID-19 hit, this union did a massive distribution of PPE to our members, such as masks, face shields, and gloves. We have now incorporated as a Welfare Fund Benefit a reimbursement to our members for any PPE they purchase.

Although there are not any clients reporting to the office unless warranted, we have asked the Department to install Plexiglass on the desk of each Officer, as we have to protect ourselves from each other as well. To date, the Department has purchased the plexiglass; however, they are requiring the officers to share the plexiglass and transport the plexiglass from where it is stored to their desk and then return it after each use.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 does not discriminate. We have had several members who have contracted the virus, and we lost one member to the virus this past May. Recently, we have been seeing an uptick in those members who have shown to be positive for the virus. There is a major concern among the members who are assigned to work at the courthouses as COVID-19 cases continue to rise. When we follow up with the Department regarding the cleaning of locations where there were positive cases, they report to be in compliance with the CDC regulations.

Recently, when the City first offered the vaccine to first responders, it was very challenging for the members to make appointments. However, once we relayed this concern to the administration, they made sure additional provisions were now available where the Officers are able to take the vaccine at the Somos Vaccination Hubs throughout the city.

Once again, the members of UPOA continue step up and volunteer to work at the City-run COVID-19 Vaccine Hubs (also known as Points of Dispensing, or PODs), where they provide security and conduct check-ins and other functions to make sure those who were eligible were vaccinated and for the process to run smoothly.

We are not sure how many members have been vaccinated. But we have recommended that the administration partner with the Health Department and consider having the vaccines administered onsite such as the NEONS to our UPOA members and other DOP staff only.

Enclosing we ask that you support the early retirement legislation as most of our members are in their 50's and older who work under very stressful, physically taxing and dangerous conditions.

We also are requesting frequent cleaning of air vents and carpets at all our worksites.



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Finally, we would like to recommend that the city post COVID 19 consider giving municipal employees the option to work remotely based on the agency operational needs as the unknown such as 911 and COVID 19 has forced us to rethink our lives as well as how we must work smarter and safer.

Once again I thank you

Testimony of Oren Barzilay, President of FDNY EMS Local 2507

Chairperson Miller, and to all members of the Labor Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak today from the perspective of the FDNY EMS, which we believe is the uniformed first responder workgroup most impacted by answering tens of thousands of emergency calls due to the coronavirus pandemic.

I am Oren Barzilay, President of FDNY EMS Local 2507. I also want to say that both Local 3621 and the FDNY EMS Superior Officers Association although they could not be here today wish to express their appreciation for the work of this Committee and the focus of today's hearing.

First, I would like to recognize and thank our city's dedicated, hardworking, and undercompensated EMT's, Paramedics and Fire Inspectors who bravely risk it all, their health, their families' health, to help tend to the urgent medical needs of New Yorkers during this extremely difficult period.

This job has gotten increasingly dangerous and each and every one of our members has stepped up to the plate to serve and protect this city in its dire time of need.

We know the immediate dangers that the increased risk our members have of contracting Covid-19. But I want to talk to you about an additional risk, which is our members' livelihood.

It is no secret that the city is being put under immense financial distress due to circumstances these last 10 months. We have seen businesses shutdown, our city in lockdown as well as rising unemployment rates.

The city's blueprint for getting back on its feet - to layoff 22,000 municipal workers including EMS first responders – seems regressive.

We must remember that these are the same responders, who at the height of this pandemic, worked so tirelessly, responding to over 10,000 emergency medical calls a day, to ensure the safety of our city's residents, before their own safety and wellbeing.

- They worked 16 to 18 hour shifts to make up for a shortage of EMS staff.
- They slept in cars for days and weeks at a time, to put food on the table, but not go home for fear of contaminating their own loved ones.

If you ask me, outsourcing our job or facets of it should and must be off the table.

Our workforce, consisting of mostly women and minorities, manage 80% of all emergency calls at the FDNY.

In the height of the pandemic, EMS managed 100% of emergency medical calls, all while our members were paid 40% less than their uniform peers.

Contrast that disparity to the City of Boston, where the EMS workforce make only 2% less than police and firefighters. The double standard here in New York City is beyond compare.

Here in the Big Apple, the highly trained medical professionals....YES MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS.....of the FDNY EMS are told we are only worth \$16.95/per hour. It's Shameful.

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Councilmembers, the EMS is the REVENUE GENERATING side of the FDNY!

The FDNY charges people's health insurance or Medicare or Medicaid for ambulance trips taken, and for providing oxygen, intravenous and other treatments.

In fact, the multi-millions in fees paid to the city for our work flows back into the Office of Management and Budget.

Yet some believe in cutting that revenue flow and outsource that income instead to some private ambulance companies or hospitals to be the beneficiary of?

Since our city is getting reimbursed for a large percentage of our work product, what's the real cost of our labor to the city? Is it \$4 or \$6 per hour, perhaps?

Does the city believe it can outsource our jobs to China or India and pay even less? Is there some private sector ambulance service here in New York City out there paying even less than the City of New York does to our members?

The life-saving service provided by medical professionals of the FDNY EMS is a WIN-WIN for the city, and most especially for its bean counters – on both ends of the financial ledger.

Today we should instead be talking about equity for these women and men doing herculean work for pauper's wages.

The coronavirus overwhelmed the entire New York City health care system, from hospitals to nursing homes, putting immeasurable stress also on the FDNY EMS workforce.

Right now, with insufficient resources, YES the city is referring calls to outside ambulance services. And THEY become the beneficiaries of the medical reimbursement and not the city treasury.

Our city's uniformed staff are more than capable of handling the day-to-day operations of caring for the needs of our fellow New Yorkers, without contract outsourcing.

But we need the support of City Hall to protect the integrity of our job, and its critical role in protecting lives.

Our members need a more stable work-life balance, with compensation more commensurate with other medical professionals and perhaps in similar proportion to our peers in the Boston EMS, paid almost the same as police and fire in their city, so that our members don't need to moonlight with two or three jobs just to survive.

Thank You.

Testimony
New York City Council Hearing on Civil Service and Labor
Clerical-Administrative Local 1549 DC 37 AFSCME
By Ralph Palladino, Local 1549 Second Vice President
January 27, 2021

Good day. I am entering testimony on behalf President Eddie Rodriguez and the 14,000 members of Local 1549 working for the city of New York in all agencies and the New York City Health and Hospitals (NYC H+H) and Metro Plus HMO. My testimony is divided up into agencies and issues concerning all agencies. Follow my testimony I have put together a “Panel of Experts” made up of members of the local working in various agencies that outline in depth issues and accounts for the agencies I am testifying about. Follow that is a grouping of published articles by these same “experts” that outline what their work entails during this COVID crisis.

Our members are by and large civil service employees. Our employment is based on merit and by management interview. Once we are hired, we serve a probationary period. This helps ensure our work is of high value with a high degree of productivity.

The following are issues and agencies you need to know about and help us improve:

Interpreter Title City Wide: As we have said for the past decade in testimony, the City needs to use the Interpreter Civil Service Title. The private temporary services are mostly a low-wage slave labor arrangement as pointed out by the investigative reporting in both New York Daily News articles. It is outrageous that they farm out jobs that could go to city residents to Mexico and other countries. It is outrageous that these companies pay \$4 an hour wage for such services. Now the Department of Investigations is going to carry on an investigation? What happened when these companies applied for their contracts? WHO VETTED THEM THEN?

Interpreter services should largely be face to face. A study by the New York Immigration Coalition confirms this.

NEED: Use of the Interpreter Title. DCAS should issue testing in a multitude of languages.

New York City Health and Hospitals (NYC H+H). We have had a good, positive relationship with the leadership of NYC H+H. They have respected the clerical staff and included them in all staff discussions and with providing the proper PPE. There is still a problem in two areas: One is the use of **Private Temps.** They have slowly been changing some over to employee status. But this has dragged on too long. It is problematic that private temp agency employees gather personal, insurance and medical related information in the registration process. The other is the use of private temp lines for interpreter services. The NYC H+H has listened to our request for more face-to-face interpreter services. Our Patient Representatives and some Client Navigators do also. But the bulk of interpreter services is farmed out to a low wage, poverty profiting company where many if not all their employees are in Mexico.

NEED: Increased staffing is critically needed given the patient volume, overtime and extra days people are working right now. They need to finish replacing the use of private temp agencies with full time employees to increase productivity. SEE PANEL BELOW.

Human Resources Administration (HRA). The problems of access for clients seeking SNAP, HASA and Medicaid Recertification has continually gotten worse from the New York Daily News article on August 30, 2020 entitled, “**NYC welfare benefit hotline is a mess months after benefits offices shut down, advocates claim**”

The city’s Management Report 2020 has reported a DECREASE in SNAP Application Timeliness, down from 92.7% in 2019 down to 74.5%! HRA has not released their Error Rates which have not hit their target in four years. Why haven’t they released the Error Rates??

HRA said they increased staff on Phone Info Lines and increased capacity. However, clients report getting dropped off such waits. The capacity increase was to increase from 25 people allowed on hold to 100. This is outrageous! Clients report to advocates that they have not been able to get recertifications and have been dropped from the SNAP rolls. The same is true of clients who have mailed in documents and tried using the app online that many cannot navigate. HRA says they must shut down centers to protect the public and employees from COVID. But if the Agency instead provided employees with proper COVID PPE, made sure the ventilations systems were upgraded properly according to guidelines and provided proper masks for client requiring they wear them this would not be a problem. IMPORTANTLY HRA has NO PLAN ON HOW TO REOPEN CENTERS!

They also continue the practice of replacing Civil Service Clerical Associates and Eligibility Specialists with Non-Competitive employees to perform clerical duties violating Civil Service rules and lowering the requirements for new hires. This is a waste of tax dollars and counter to the need for improved productivity. The agency follows the Mike Pence, private-business model in servicing that failed and has since been largely replaced in Indian. From our perspective it is a total disgrace. Last year the City Council found the funding to hire Social Workers to alleviate wait times. This is all well and good. But the Council did not pursue the hiring of Eligibility Specialists to do likewise. That would have been far more beneficial.

NEED: Hire 400 Eligibility Specialists for the positions that they attrited and allowed to be lost over the past five years. They must cease replacing Non-Competitive titles to subvert and destroy the Civil Service System. If they do those things productivity would increase and client satisfaction with the agency would improve drastically.

SEE THE PANEL BELOW FOR MORE INSIGHTS AND INFORMATION.

911 NYPD: Overall the crisis has led to the need for increased staffing. The texting and other new job functions means extra work and so more time is needed to perform the new duties. The PPE issue is being worked on between the union and NYPD. There have been some problems with management and staff no being masked in the work area and questions about ventilations. It is impossible for the staff to work the required socially distancing from each other. SEE THE PANEL BELOW FOR MORE INSIGHTS AND INFORMATION.

NEED: Increased staffing to keep up with added responsibilities and increased calls.

DOITT 311: There has been an increase in calls during the crisis SEE THE PANEL DISCUSSION BELOW FOR MORE INFORMATION. The union and management have worked cooperatively together to fix any health and safety issues that arose. Retention rates for the Call Center Representatives (CCR) is poor. It has been suggested that the city upgrade the pay scale for the highly specialized title to retain positions and enhance morale and productivity.

NEED: Additional staffing and upgrade of the CCR title.

Impact of DCAS/CITY OF NEW YORK substituting Clerical Associate Civil Service employees with Non-Competitive titles is an attack on the Civil Service System and a waste of tax dollars. Civil Service titles are merit based and fair. The non-competitive process is a “hire whomever they want” without standards, competition, or merit. It is also a waste of city tax dollars since the work performed by the non-competitive titles is the same as those of Clerical Associates. The salaries of the non-competitive titles are a bit higher. Civil Service employees are taken off a numerical list and must go through a 1 in 3 interview whereby one person is chosen. They also serve a probationary period. Civil Servants are more productive because of this process. **NEED: The city must stop attacking the Civil Service System**

Local 1549 Experts Panel: Hospitals, 911, HRA, 311, OPA

1-Hospital Clericals are Everyday Heroes

By Melissa Tirado, Local 1549 Hospital Executive Vice President working the North Central Bronx COVID Clinic.

Clericals like myself working in our great public system, New York City Health and Hospitals (NYC H+H) are the first people patients see, whether it is in our lobby, emergency room, outpatient clinics, cashier stations, admitting, Inpatient Units, ICU'S, patient accounts and medical records. We work directly with the patients, most time within the non-safe zone of six feet of them out of necessity.

I work in the COVID Clinic at the New York City Health and Hospitals (NYC H+H) at North Central Bronx Hospital (NCB). I know from my own experience that the hardworking essential frontline clerical employees are everyday heroes helping many New Yorkers in getting appointments, registering to be seen, and helping with applying for insurance.

Many patients will be lost in our health care system without the clerical workers. The work we perform helps alleviate stress away from the patient. We do the work that the NYC H+H and professional staff needs done but should not do, so they can better focus on serving the public whether it is social workers, doctors, or nurses. We generate a Patient's Medical Record and capture critical information so the hospitals can obtain funding that is desperately needed.

Many of our fellow essential workers throughout the city have come into NCB to be vaccinated. They thank the clerical staff for our services.

Many other titles within the NYC H+H system also realize the importance and need of the clerical staff especially when it comes to making an appointment to be vaccinated in an overwhelming system where no appointments are seemingly available.

It is sad that the frontline clerical in Health and Hospitals has been overlooked and was not acknowledged as heroes despite the hardships and health risks throughout this pandemic. But that did not stop 1549 members from continuing to do their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2-What We Need at NYPD 911

By Chrystle Bullock, Local 549 Officer at Large and 911 PCT

I am a front line 911 Police Communication Technician. What we need at the two 911 PSAC's are the following:

- **The need for all the operators to have compressed tours(12hour) work schedule.** We have parents especially single parents that have young children in grade school and must do remote learning so the stress of working overtime and then coming home to help their children in school is very overwhelming. The overtime is still high at 911, call volume is not as bad as it was at the beginning of the pandemic so compressed tour could ease down the need for overtime Social distancing could also be obtained if everyone were on compressed tours because less people would be at work at the same time.
- **Uniform officers are still not wearing masks** while walking around our work areas all the time. Mask wearing should be enforced.
- **The HVAC (Heating ventilation and air conditioning system should be inspected.** DCAS Doitt and building services are not complying with Dc37 health and safety for an inspection.

3-HRA: SNAP, HASA, MEDICAID RECERTS

1-Clients complain about waits for benefits and at offices. Members say they come into offices with problems with their cases. They complain about wait times while there in crowded areas. Staffing shortage to blame for that.

2-SAFETY AND HEALTH ISSUE AT HRA 505 CLERMONT SITE: A member at 505 Clermont regarding the lack of social distancing by clients in the lobby of 505 Clermont. To date nothing has changed regarding clients not social distancing despite reporting this to management. This presents a dangerous public health risk situation as it relates to COVID.

3-From Brenda Walker, Chapter Chair Social Service Chapter, Local 1549

Most of HRA staff are working remotely from home with approximately 80% working 100% of the time from home with the remaining staff working on a weekly alternate schedule. This is particularly true of the Medicaid staff. HASA staff are on a 3/2 alternate schedule.

Note: Only staff who do not have the ability to work from home for whatever reason may be required to come in on a daily or alternate basis or if it is their choice to come in daily. Since there are only **one SNAP, HASA and MEDICAID office open to the public in each borough**, most clients are using the smart phone or computer to apply for benefits, but they may also walk into any center open to the public for service.

Due to COVID mostly all recerts are done through a mass rebudgeting process. Early in the pandemic there was an all-hands-on deck call by the agency and many other clerical and eligibility specialists from sanitation, Medicaid etc. were reassigned to SNAP to assist with the high demand of applications. DCAS employees, Metro Plus HMO from NYC H+H, and higher paid Case workers were also redeployed to SNAP and although many reassigned staff have returned to their permanent positions the agency has not given a clear answer if the Case Workers have done likewise which may suggest that they have not.

This overall redeployment may have also contributed to a spike in the error rates in SNAP. There was a serious lack of training.

Safety and health issues in all areas remain a concern especially in the centers that are open to the public, most centers have installed social distancing markers, but it appears that plexi-glass is absent. Even in HASA where there is a specialized population being served. This report speaks to locations in the Bronx.

4-From Felix Cooper, Local 1549 Treasurer and former SNAP Eligibility Specialist

There is at least one Medicaid office in each borough as well as one Job Center in each borough that remains open to clients however there are strongly encouraged to apply online. The offices that remain open there are staggered staff adhering to Covid-19 guidelines that only allow up to 25% including social distancing markers, and PPE. Most clerical staff report at least 1-2 days weekly, while ES's report 1 day a week, and at other locations staggered staff 2 -3 days and with some altering weeks. That is also in some cases where staff do not entertain the public. In most instances managers and supervisors remain home

4- 311 DOITT Issues

By Jeffrey Usher, Chapter Chair and 311 Call Center Representative

The call volume is still high due to vaccinations roll-out and COVID- 19 info, and food requests to name a few. Also, call about property tax and how COVID is affects people paying their bills. There is a high level of call due to COVID. from rent assistance, food assistance, public benefits, testing sites, vaccine sites, mental health services, and homeless services.

Some Safety and Health issues are not resolved. The union has been advocating to get access to PPE, temperature checks, face shield all which is now being provided. The 311 management has been cooperative concerning this.

Overall, it would help to have increased staffing to better take care of the increased volume of calls.

We need more training done at the call center for highly specialized types of information. This would be mainly for property tax, parking tickets, sanitation, and building complaints.

There needs to be more transparency between the agency and 311 needs to increase the information we need to better answer questions from the public.

5- OFFICE OF PAYROLL - OPA

The dedicated clerical staff at OPA is responsible for payroll for the entire city of New York. Through this pandemic they have worked diligently from home and their offices to make sure that all employees and First Responders received their pay and correct time and leave balances were maintained.

Their efforts have helped morale and productivity in this COVID crisis. They should be saluted.

On behalf of the members of Local 1549 and President Eddie Rodriguez we thank you

Please see the article written by our members that better describes their work during COVID:

Clerical-Administrative Local 1549 DC 37 AFSCME 15,000 tax paying Members and Union Strong

We Help Make the City Run!



**Fighting for
Economic and
Social Justice.**

**Recognizing and
Thanking Our First
Responders and
Essential Workers
during COVID
Crisis.**

Hospital Clericals: Face to face registration and securing health insurance for COVID patients working in Testing Centers, Emergency Rooms, Inpatient Units and ICUs.

911 Dispatchers and Supervisors: Forced to work in crowded unsafe conditions taking calls for help from frightened and tearful COVID patients.

311 Call Center Representatives: Faced unsafe, overcrowded conditions

while being short staffed. Handled three times more calls than usual-150,000-200,000 daily.

SNAP Eligibility Specialists: Faced with an explosion of people needing food stamps while working overtime everyday up to 5 hours while facing severe short staffing.

At OPA payroll: you showed up for work. You made sure all city's workers received their pay checks.



Eddie Rodriguez
President



Alma Roper
Executive V.P.

**They are Essential Workers
and Deserve our Support,
Thanks, Recognition
and Respect!**

2nd Vice President, **Ralph Palladino**
3rd Vice President, **Jamaisa Johnson**
and the entire Executive Board

Secretary-Treasurer, **Felix Cooper**
Recording Secretary, **Rhonda Myers**



We are First Responders!

Hospital Clericals on the front line

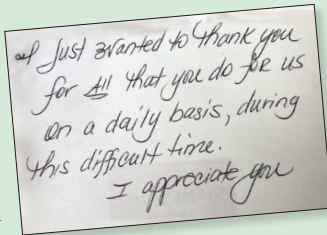
By Melissa Tirado, *Steward North Central Bronx Hospital*

MY co-workers performing registration duties in Emergency Rooms were the first to meet and greet the patients. This means we generate the medical records and capture the finances for the hospital. We were at great risk to also become victims of this pandemic. The same is true of those who work in ICU and on Inpatient Units.

I had great concern for my co-workers because of the changes that this life-threatening pandemic thrust on us. There was and is anxiety among felt by all of us in working in hospitals due to the uncertainty of what the future holds.

The COVID-19 outbreak disrupted regular operations and procedures of our city agencies. This forced many of us to adjust to the new ways of working despite the great risk to our lives while helping others.

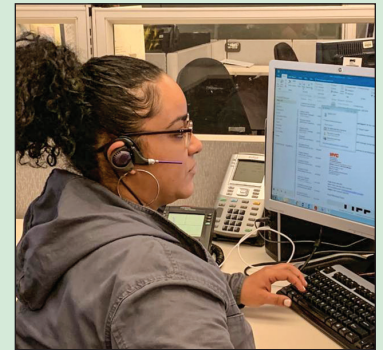
My co-workers needed information. I did my best to keep them informed and find out their concerns and needs. There was always good communication between



I just wanted to thank you for all that you do for us on a daily basis, during this difficult time. I appreciate you



Melissa Tirado pictured with Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz was given a thank you from members at NCB (pictured on left). Emergency Room Clerical Associate IV Janine John registering new patients shown above.



the us and our union leaders. Local 1549 members have stepped up in their role proving that they are essential to our hospital. We are truly First Responders but are too often ignored by management and politicians.

I want every 1549 member to know that we are not alone. I am proud of all the work WE are doing and will continue to do.

311-Information Please!

By Jeffrey Usher, *311 DOITT Chapter Chair*

CALL Center Representatives at NYC 311 are essential City employees, we are working to assure that New Yorkers get the critical information they need during this pandemic. We make sure that senior citizens and other vulnerable populations in New York City have access to healthy food.

We provide information on COVID-19 testing sites throughout the City and take reports of people violating social distancing restrictions among numerous other services.

On an average day, the 311 Call Center receives between 40,000 and 55,000 calls, but during this pandemic, the number of calls per day is often between 150,000 to 200,000 calls. As essential employees having to report to work adjustments had to be made to practice social distancing in the office. Members had to relocate



Chapter Chair Jeffrey Usher on the job, CCR at work servicing calls.



to other buildings to limit the amount of people in the call center. The tables were removed in the break room eating areas forcing us to use chairs as tables. We are given hand sanitizer and face masks to use in the call center and for travel.

Despite this our members still have concerns. One of them is sanitizing surfaces. CDC makes it clear that cleaning a surface is not the same as sanitizing a surface. Members share workstations and they are bringing in their own sanitizing supplies because supplies are scarce. Subways are filled with mentally disturbed individuals making travel unsafe.

We just hope that our elected officials provide financial compensation and not just platitudes. We push forward anyway and continue to deliver the best service to the public and do everything in our power to ensure New Yorkers remain safe during this difficult time.

911 Operator in the Coronavirus World

By Chrystle Bullock,

NYPD 911 Police Communication Technician and DC 37 Local 1549 AFSCME Delegate

THE first voice on the line that you hear when you call in an emergency is the 911 Operator. We tend to be the forgotten voice. We want to be heard and we are seeking official First Responder status.

We are the invisible voice behind the radio of the police in the street. The voice that gets them needed resources when reinforcements when needed. We are the calm when chaos is all that officers are dealing with. When calls go to others who are official First Responders, they must come to us first, and then we screen and dispatch them to the Fire Department or Emergency Medical Technicians. We are the first link in the chain to keep New Yorkers safe.

We may not be in the street making arrests or calming down an out of control emotionally disturbed person. We may not be gearing up for the next protest, or out making arrests because of the high rate in criminal activity due to the downturn of the economy. But we are frontline and essential workers.

911 has been there to answer the call from the very beginning of the pandemic. We cannot stay home and work remotely like so many others. Every day we go to work leaving our families to answer the call not knowing when and where we may pick up this Coronavirus and get sick, or worse get our family members sick. We are single moms raising kids and caregivers taking care of elderly parents. We are holding down New York City.

In all my 27 years as a Police Dispatcher never in my wildest imagination would I have



ever imagined or fathom all that has happened the past six months. I worked September 11th attack on the World Trade Center, the plane crash over the Rockaways and the Blackout of 2003 but this pandemic is beyond the imagination. Every call is a coronavirus emergency. Every call, patients are experiencing all the same symptoms. They are sick, deathly sick or unconscious. How in 2020 America could this happen?

Through it all we must work in unsafe and unhealthy conditions. Our desks are permanent structures that are well within the six-foot safety

protection zone for COVID. Our union has made sure that we do have proper PPE equipment, plexiglass, proper ventilation, and daily temperature checks though. But this only mitigates the fear and threat of contracting the virus and not stop it.

We hope you will agree that we deserve official First Responder designation. There is legislation at the federal and state levels that if passed would make the status we need to be come official.

Please contact your congressional representative and ask them to support the bill: House Bill- Torres HR-1629, The Saves Act, and Senate Bill- Klobuchar/Burr S-3115, Next Generation 911 Preservation Act. Do the same to your state legislative representatives for bills: Senate- #S.8235 Martinez and Assembly- #A.10293 DeStefano.

Remember that we are there to help you and your family to stay safe. Help us!

Local 1549 Addresses Issues at HRA



LOCAL 1549 President Eddie Rodriguez led a team of members from the Social Service Chapter in a discussion with the New York City Council Finance Committee staff. It was done virtually on Zoom.

Second Vice President Ralph Palladino and Special Assistant to the President Wanda Williams facilitated the meeting that included the new Chapter Chair of the Social Service Chapter Brenda Walker and Local Secretary Treasurer Felix Cooper who is also the Chapter Vice Chair. Member activists who participated in the advocacy meeting representing their co-workers: Luchy Perez, Justin Smith, Mark Arthur, Jodi McMillan, Jenn Garrido.

Both Walker and Cooper recruited members from various programs and departments in HRA to bring problems and recommend solutions to the City Council. Members servicing SNAP, Medicaid, HASA, TIPS and Phone Line attended.

Recommendations were made including the need for increased staffing of Eligibility Specialists; opposition to reduction proposals by the city of the Clerical Associate title; opposition to closing and consolidation of service centers; the need to further decrease harassment by management that leads to a toxic work environment that adversely affects productivity; the need for use of the Interpreter Title to better serve a diverse population; improvements in the computer systems.

A follow up letter was sent to the City Council leadership and Social Service Committee document-

ing the discussion and needs. It was also sent to the Mayor, Comptroller and HRA top management.

The letter also documented the attack on Civil Service jobs at HRA. The city is reducing Civil Service Clerical Associates and replacing them with non-competitive titles. This leads to cronyism and management not hiring more qualified applicants, which adversely affects productivity.

Just before this discussion President Rodriguez signed on to a letter documenting problems with servicing in social service programs generated by advocates for the poor led by the Urban Justice Center. That letter coincided with the union's position presented to the city council.

President Rodriguez, Local 1549 members and staff, and others testified last year at the city council about problems with servicing, over automation, closing of centers, and management. President Rodriguez had letters to the editor published in the New York Daily News about the issues. He also did center walk throughs and had membership discussion meetings where Commissioner Banks heard members.

President Rodriguez said, "We will continue to fight and not rest until our members are treated with respect and we get the staffing that is desperately needed. Servicing of the those in need is our calling.

We will continue to work with advocates to improve services. I especially want to thank all the member activists who have testified to the city council. Their participation makes us stronger."



Testimony
Committee on Civil Service and Labor

NYC MEA Executive Director Alice Wong
January 27, 2021

“The State of Labor During COVID-19”

Good afternoon. I’m Alice Wong, the Executive Director of NYC Managerial Employees Association.

Thank you, Chair Miller, for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the 16,000 NYC managerial employees and MEA members. These city employees are largely composed of women and minority groups, representing the diversity of NYC.

During the height of COVID-19, managerial employees worked in areas outside of their job description, without overtime pay, or permission to work from home.

ACS managerial employees reported to all field offices to provide essential services that ensured the safety of children and families. Their work proceeded, regardless of the fact that PPE was not available between March and May. MEA advocated to make sure the voices of our members and frontline workers were heard. When PPE equipment became available, instructions and usage protocol was provided. ACS leadership was responsive and proactive with communication, announcements, and updates regarding COVID-19. This was an example of leadership and concern for ACS staff members.

H+H employees were not as fortunate. Employees at the manager level work outside their job description and scope of duties, do not have the option to work from home, nor to decline assigned tasks. These non-clinical managers were told to write up employees who wanted to wear face masks and were often mocked. Managers were recruited to provide support services and troubleshoot for the hospital in clinical areas outside their areas of managerial responsibility, such as facilities and engineering. Employees who tested positive were told to report to work instead of staying home to quarantine. Derik Braswell, a materials management manager at Elmhurst Hospital and MEA member, contracted the virus while working on a COVID ward and passed away on April 20, 2020.

H+H Employees requested for infection control inspections that still have not been made. Non-clinical managers are expected to bridge the staffing gap, yet they are not treated as essential workers who would qualify for the vaccine in the first round or for HEROES pay. As MEA continues to advocate for H+H managers, we ask for open communication, clear safety guidelines, and consistent updates to COVID-19.

Chair Miller asked MEA to conduct a survey with a focus on the City’s communication, training protocols, and safety procedures. MEA will provide the results of the survey to the committee for review in the coming weeks.

MEA is committed to providing advocacy for all city managers and we thank Chair Miller for the opportunity to testify on the impact of COVID-19 on behalf of the 16,000 NYC manager employees.

Thank you.

Testimony
Presented by
Donna G. Ellaby, President of CWA Local 1183,
Representing the NYC Board of Elections workers
Before the Civil Service and Labor Committee of the NYC Council
Chair: Hon. I. Daneek Miller

Deploying poll workers (who first must be trained), voting equipment, furniture, ballots, and now PPE and protective shields to over 1200 polling sites for an election is like handling the logistics for a military engagement. Such deployments are months in the making. Early Voting presents the NYC Board of Elections (BOE) with a number of new logistical challenges, particularly in our efforts to secure ADA compliant polling sites.

Workers at the NYC Board of Elections (BOE) put in over 80 hours a week for months to make all this happen. We are essential workers who have been on the job throughout the pandemic. Yet last summer we reached out to the Mayor's office and were denied sufficient PPE. Access to enrichment programs for the children of our workers was also initially denied. Four of our coworkers lost their lives to COVID 19 and over 100 were sickened by it, as were many of their family members.

Processing close to a million absentee ballots for a Presidential Election when fewer than one hundred thousand had been the norm led to the repurposing of every inch of office space we had. Cages and cages of absentee ballots crowded our hallways, posing serious fire safety risks. The BOE has submitted requests to expand our office space since 2016. Only one of our nine requests has been granted. The current office space and Voting Machine Facilities we occupy date to the era of the old lever machines. Unless we are supported in our efforts to expand and modernize our operations we will not be able to adequately address the twenty-first-century needs of NYC's voters, who increasingly want to exercise their franchise by utilizing all available options, including both Early and Absentee Voting.

None of the myriad tasks we undertake year in and year out can be done remotely. The vast majority of these bipartisan tasks cannot be accomplished with social distancing. We are not only essential workers but, as we enter the petitioning calendar and conduct special elections, we become frontline workers who deserve to be prioritized for the Covid vaccine. The BOE workforce includes a high percentage of older workers. Many of them, as well as many younger workers, face chronic health challenges that put them in high-risk categories. The majority are people of color. In addition, our "temporary" workers, hundreds of whom have been on the job continuously for a year or more (in

some cases much longer)--are deprived of prescription drug coverage because the number of permanent clerk positions has not been increased in over five years.

The COVID 19 pandemic will not be the last life-threatening virus to endanger us. It is time to transform our workplaces into healthy, safe, modernized environments that enable municipal workers to carry out the mission of their agencies without being afraid to come to work.

Thank you to Chairman I. Daneek Miller and other council members for this opportunity to speak.

Mickeal F. Borruso

351 East Fourth Street #3-B

New York, NY 10009

917-297-0669

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January 16 2021

NYC's minorities, women, LGBTQ and long term associates are facing serious problems pertaining to jobs and stability. These are the people that made our companies great and form the backbone of NYC. Now they are being outsourced for younger cheaper labor. These jobs have often been held for decades by a workforce disproportionately comprised of women people of color and other minorities.

We need an ordinance like the one in Philadelphia, written under the banner of "Black Jobs Matter". This ordinance would give laid off employees the right to return to their jobs after business resumes until 2025, even if the property changes the ownership, just like in the case of Philadelphia. A right to Recall will help to protect NYC's most vulnerable. Disney now has a retention to recall rights recall (*Links attached*)

I have been employed as a Bartender at the Broadway Lounge, located inside the Times Square Marriott Marquis, for the last 24 years. I started my Marriott career at their West Shore property in Tampa, Florida, in 1980, while still serving in the US Air Force. I actually never applied to work for the company. Michael Quinlan the Food & Beverage Director at the Westshore property was impressed with my work ethics and the way I treated guest at my bar and offered me the job. Since than I have worked at numerous Marriotts in several cities and states.

In March of 2020, I was furloughed, along with approximately 1,000 other hotel workers, due to the restrictions stemming from the COVID pandemic. Although we were put on furlough in March, the Broadway and Crossroad Lounges and restaurant had been scheduled to close between June and December of 2020 for renovations. For the past two years the staff were expecting to be furloughed and return to work in December, as we were furloughed we were told we would, indeed, return to our jobs.

On December 9th, (a month before a 100 million dollar renovation was completed) I received a letter from Marriott stating ,"*Marriott International, Inc., doing business as the New York Marriott Marquis (the location), will implement job eliminations on March 12, 2021. The position you hold will be permanently terminated.*", and in that same letter, "*Conditions will improve in 2021 and beyond and invite you to consider pursuing other career opportunities at the Marriott by visiting careers.marriott.com*"

The letter basically directed us to visit the same career website that the general public, including prospective employees who lack not only experience, but also history with the Marriott company would use. This would certainly be a disadvantage to over 850 of us, many spending 20 plus years working at the Marquis. If we are forced to start over, being middle-aged, with some even in their 70s, and most of us being minorities, we would have a hard time finding new employment and be left without medical benefits in the midst of a pandemic. Being a Veteran I have health benefits for life, unfortunately most of my Marriott family does not.

Recently Marriott and Host divided into two separate companies. Marriott will oversee lodging, food and facilities and Host will handle Marriott's real estate properties. In addition to the NY Marquis, Host owns several other properties that have recently terminated a large percentage of the staff, including the Copley Hotel in Boston. Last month, Host terminated over 200 employees at the Copley; you may have read about

this. Boston City Councilor Ed Flynn Filed a resolution in Support of Hotel Workers' Statewide, "Right to Recall" Other politicians and industry leaders in Massachusetts are also organizing in support of workers. Cities in several states, including California, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Vegas have already passed the same type of ordinances. Still others are in the process. *(Link attached)*

In December of 2019 there were creditable rumors, that all the bars and restaurants on the 8th floor of the Marquis would be outsourced, once renovations were completed, meaning that our jobs would have been eliminated, even if the pandemic hadn't become part of the landscape. **Outsourcing for NYC Marriott and Host Hotel owned properties is a corporate policy which has been implemented Nationwide for years.** Now they are using the pandemic as an excuse to lay off long term employees and hire new ones when the business returns. We also found out in June they changed the severance package. In the past it was two weeks severance for every year worked. They changed it to one week per year most of us have been there 20 to 35 years.

In New York it is imperative that this ordinance includes a right to recall for workers, even if the business is sold, Outsourced or is going through a foreclosure. This will prevent companies from splitting into separate entities for profits at the cost of their long term dedicated work force.

We know tourism is coming back to New York at some point. Hard-working employees deserve an opportunity to reclaim their positions and return to the businesses they help build. We need your help to get this passed in NYC. Many employees are contacting their state representatives, I'm contacting you. With your help New York City can be a powerful voice in the fight against corporate greed that will protect tens of thousands of hard-working employees, most being minorities and some who have worked their entire careers for these corporations only to be discarded like outdated milk.

On December 23rd we had a rally in front of the Marriott Marquis, Time Square. We asked for Right to recall or a fair severance package. We were fortunate to have State Senator Brad Hoylman join us and speak on our behalf, Times Square is in his district. We had another one on Friday the 15th of January at 12 Noon. This rally was a cry for a Right to Recall. Again we were fortunate to have State Senator Brad Hoylman, we also had 2021 Mayoral candidate Dianne Morales join us. Mr. Hoylman spoke about Fair severance and Miss Morales addressed the importance of a Right to Recall ordinance. They both spoke of the improper and distasteful way the Marriott has cared for their employees, emphasizing the fact that the majority of the people effected are minorities. SheShe Dance kept the crowd energized with chants and numerous songs including one specially written for the rally. Right now we are in the process of planning a possible rally in February at Marriott/Host corporate headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Mickeal F. Borruso

Below are links to the ordinances passed in other cities

Information about Philadelphia:

<https://whyy.org/articles/majority-of-city-council-supports-giving-laid-off-tourism-workers-first-dibs-on-jobs/amp/>

Information about Baltimore:

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/politics/bs-md-pol-recall-hotel-workers-20201005-yzw37gujukrep7p2pk3jfp4cbu-story.html?outputType=amp>

Here is a link to info about what's happening in Boston:

<https://caughtinsouthie.com/news-politics/councilors-flynn-file-resolution-in-support-of-marriott-copley-place-hotel-workers-statewide-right-to-recall/>

This resolution has been approved by the Boston City Council.

Here is link to the Boston resolution:

<https://twitter.com/EdforBoston/status/1339306362187223042?s=20>

New Haven has also passed a right to recall law:

<https://www.nhregister.com/news/article/Workers-to-be-first-in-line-New-Haven-15821390.php#:~:text=News-,Workers%20to%20'be%20first%20in%20line'%3A%20New%20Haven%20adopts,of%20recall%20for%20hotel%20jobs&text=That's%20the%20scenario%20the%20Board,hotel%20industry%20begins%20hiring%20racaagain.>

Here is a link to info about the LA Law : <https://www.employmentlawworldview.com/city-of-los-angeles-right-of-recall-and-worker-retention-ordinances-take-effect-us/>

LA Resolution:

http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/145786.pdf?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=



Testimony of Nontraditional Employment for Women

Committee on Civil Service and Labor – State of Organized Labor during COVID-19

- Wednesday, January 26, 2021 - 10 AM

Good morning. I am Erik Antokal and I am the AVP of Programs at of Nontraditional Employment for Women, or NEW, a nonprofit with a 42-year record of transforming the economic prospects for women through careers in unionized construction careers.

Building trades unions have always been NEW's key partners. For fifteen years, the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York and its affiliate unions have set aside apprenticeship opportunities for graduates of NEW, 85% of whom are Black or brown women, and whose incomes are on average tripled simply by starting their careers in the building trades. These careers offer middle-class wages and benefits, safety protections that are even more important during the pandemic, and representation that counteracts employer abuses. In 2018, the BCTC committed to a historic 50% increase in set asides for women – 15% of apprenticeship slots are now reserved for graduates of NEW.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been pervasive in NEW's community, and the crisis continues to be disproportionately devastating for women. In the month of December 2020, Black and brown women lost a net 160,000 jobs while white women and white men actually gained net employment. Statistics like these have continued throughout the pandemic and will only get better if we help to secure union careers for women. In the face of such stark inequality in the Partnerships between organized labor and community-based organizations like NEW thus become all the more important to infuse equity in our economic recovery.

The building trades unions have worked to ensure worker safety as COVID cases have risen, through PPE distribution, additional cleaning, and enhanced site safety controls. City efforts and employer efforts to restore our economy must be done responsibly, with apprenticeship requirements and with strong worker protections provided by unions so that we can not just recover, but also blunt the effects such catastrophic losses in future crises. Federal stimulus funds and City efforts in capital construction, building retrofits, setup of emergency health facilities, new building operations protocols and other projects should be conducted with union labor, so that all New Yorkers, regardless of background, can build a stable life for themselves following the immensely challenging year we have all endured.

Thank you for your time.

**TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL 372, NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME
TO THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR
JANUARY 27, 2021
10:00 AM**

Chairman I. Daneek Miller, and distinguished members of the Committee on Civil Service and Labor, I am President Shaun D. Francois I., and it is an honor to testify on behalf of the approximately 24,000 members represented by Local 372 - NYC Board of Education Employees, District Council 37 – AFSCME.

The COVID-19 pandemic has crystalized the social and economic disparities of Local 372 members. About 43% of the union membership are essential workers -- namely, school lunch employees and school crossing guards deemed essential workers by the Department of Education. They risked their own health as they remained on the front lines throughout even the worst of the pandemic. Local 372 members went to work even as much of the City shut down safely sheltered in their homes. Our job categories are the lowest paid. Pay sometimes as little as the state minimum wage of **\$15 per hour**. Additionally, many of our members are at higher risk because they are older, with 33% of the membership over 55. Our workforce is predominately Black and Latino at 85% living and working in the zip codes with the highest COVID rates much higher than other communities.

Our School Lunch Workers continued to unload, prepare, and serve food each day without the necessary PPEs to ensure safety, as they served meals to food-insecure members of the community. These meals provided free takeout meals to all New Yorkers in nearby schools. Before the City step up to protect these frontline workers, it was Local 372 leadership that self-purchased and sought to mask its members. It was then Local 372's titles that risked infection when there were no provisions in place or proper training of custodians on the safe utilization of electrostatic sprayers and the safe handling of the chemicals sanitize schools.

School Crossing Guards were mandated to work when no children were on their street; they were told they if they didn't come to work, they would not get paid. They put their health and lives at risk to remain on the job when classrooms were empty to ensure pedestrian-safe-access to city schools for the grab-and-go program. Our members had to communicate procedures for safe crossings instructed by Centers for Disease Control guidelines to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 to stay at least 6 feet apart from other individuals and using safe sidewalk etiquette.

While I am hopeful that the new Biden Administration's immediate focus on COVID-19 will help bring the pandemic under control, hope is no reason to let our guard down. Local 372 members cannot be left behind as the State and City administer vaccinations to the most vulnerable, at-risk, and essential populations. Our members need access to the assistance, benefits, and protections that help them continue working safely during this emergency state. This includes meaningful sick leave, unemployment benefits, and hazard pay.

In addition to the pandemic's exposure-related challenges, we must also face its mental health effects on our students. According to a recent CDC report, the proportion of children's mental

health-related visits to Emergency Departments has skyrocketed since April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and students' lives' virtualization. The report concluded that it is critical to monitor children's mental health, promote coping and resilience, and expand access to services to support children's mental health. The Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialists (SAPIS), represented by Local 372, which provide essential social-emotional strategies and services to help youth remain learning-ready, are best-equipped to shoulder this responsibility.

Since 1971, the SAPIS program has provided Evidence-Based Program (EBP) presentations, group and individual counseling, and positive alternatives to NYC public school students. SAPIS counselors service K-12 in all 32 school districts in New York City, including special education. This includes classroom presentations and counseling for mental health services and crisis mitigation in the individual and group settings; and more. SAPIS counselors were already trained and ready to respond to the COVID-19. The SAPIS's training provides students and their families with the tools to navigate the trauma of social and personal pressures and long-term consequences of COVID that can derail healthy development.

However, the NYC Department of Education is not currently prioritizing our existing SAPIS assets to meet the COVID-enhanced demand for more Social-Emotional Learning curricula. Mayor de Blasio, First Lady McCray, and Chancellor Carranza recently announced a new 2021 Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan. This plan proposes the hiring of social workers and community-based organizations to duplicate the programming SAPIS already provides. SAPIS are more versatile and cost-effective than social workers, who are not trained to provide this broad range of one-on-one and group-based services and programming. Instead, the DOE should prioritize investment in the existing SAPIS program to meet this pandemic-induced need before contracting with outside entities or hiring social workers to perform our work.

The future that an education provides for a child is one of the most important obligations society must fulfill, and that is why tens of thousands of Local 372 members continue to face the threats of exposure and infection to show up to work each day. I thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Local 372, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.



Make the Road New York Testimony on the State of Labor During the COVID-19 Pandemic

January 27, 2021

New York City Council Committee on Civil Service and Labor

Make the Road New York is pleased to submit this testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Civil Service and Labor on the State of Labor during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Make the Road New York (MRNY) is a non-profit community-based membership organization with over 25,000 low-income members dedicated to building the power of immigrant and working-class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services. MRNY's five community centers, including centers in the New York City neighborhoods of Jackson Heights, Bushwick, and Port Richmond, provide a broad array of support to thousands of New Yorkers every year. During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, our staff have focused our efforts on ensuring that working families that have suffered illness or income loss have access to food, health care, housing supports, cash assistance and legal assistance.

Our staff and members have seen first-hand the extent of the devastation the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought on low-wage and immigrant workers and workers of color. Infections and deaths ravaged working-class immigrant, Black, and Brown communities like the ones where our members live, often in overcrowded multi-generational households, with multiple family members working in front-line jobs that have put them at high risk of infection. Even as the hope of vaccination brings us some hope, we see the long-lasting effects of the pandemic in record rates of economic calamity, job loss and financial insecurity, and a brewing housing crisis of untold proportions. The exclusion of many immigrants from critical federal programs and other forms of worker protections, including unemployment insurance and all forms of safety-net assistance, has further exacerbated already stark social and economic disparities in our city.

Months into the COVID-19 pandemic, a MRNY survey of community members found that 66% of respondents remained out of work, across gender groups, and close to 60% were not able to pay rent for May, June and July.¹ An even high percentage of respondents, 85%, were worried about their ability to pay rent in August. Meanwhile, less than half of the unemployed U.S. citizen respondents, and nearly none of the unemployed undocumented respondents, had

¹ UNEMPLOYED AND EXCLUDED (Make the Road New York, August 2020), available at <https://maketheroadny.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/MRNY-Survey2.pdf>.

received any federal or state economic assistance.

Make the Road members have had to face the impossible choice between risking their personal and familial health, on the one hand, and finding a way to feed their loved ones on the other. We have heard from countless members and clients that they felt they had no other choice but continue to report to work even if their employer failed to provide masks or gloves, forced them to labor in overcrowded workplaces, or continued to operate a non-essential business during the Governor's PAUSE Order. Unfortunately, we have also found it virtually impossible to challenge illegal business openings and health and safety violations or enforce the protections that were supposed to keep all non-essential workers safe. Under Trump's leadership, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration essentially abdicated responsibility for enforcing federal health and safety rules. Trump's Labor Secretary, Eugene Scalia, declined to issue mandatory Covid-19 safety rules outlining what steps companies must follow to protect employees during the pandemic, instead offering optional guidelines, and issued only minimal fines against employers in a couple of cases.²

And while both the New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) and the New York State Office of the Attorney General (NYSOAG) took on responsibility for investigating violations of the Governor's PAUSE order halting nonessential business, many workers have been unaware of their rights or how to report violations, and even advocates have seen little to no enforcement when violations are reported. We have one client whose employer, a manufacturer of window blinds, shut down for only a few days after Governor Cuomo's order before illegally reopening. Factory managers told workers to enter the building through a side door to evade detection, and threatened to fire workers if they failed to report to work, even if they were sick. Other employers have fired workers for speaking out about dangerous conditions. Make the Road represents a former Amazon employee who was fired after joining with coworkers to protest safety issues at the corporation's JFK8 warehouse facility in Staten Island. The National Labor Relations Board found merit in his claim that the corporation illegally discharged him for concerted activity in violation of federal labor laws,³ but we know that employers throughout the city routinely retaliate against workers for raising health and safety and other concerns, and that most of those workers never seek legal redress. Many more workers stay silent, fearing retaliation and knowing they cannot afford any loss in income.

We have dozens of clients whose employers suddenly shut down their businesses owing their employees days or weeks worth of wages; many said they could not pay because of financial difficulties, or simply disappeared and stopped responding to calls. Employers in several of our cases have declared bankruptcy, seeking to discharge their debts to workers, which generally take less priority than debts to commercial lenders and other for-profit entities. One group of clients, former bakery delivery drivers, won hundreds of thousands of dollars in backpay for a retaliatory firing, unpaid wages and damages. The bakery declared bankruptcy in June, leaving workers with only the possibility of collecting a fraction of the money owed to them.

² "Trump's Workplace Watchdog Assailed for Lenient Penalties on Covid Safety Violators," (Politico, Oct. 6, 2020), available at <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/10/06/osha-coronavirus-penalties-426828>

³ "US Investigation Finds Amazon Illegally Fired Warehouse Worker," (Guardian, Dec. 17, 2020), available at <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/dec/17/amazon-fired-warehouse-worker-nlrb-gerald-bryson>

Our enforcement efforts have also been stymied by court closings and by backlogs at the NYSDOL, which reassigned many of its Labor Standards Division investigators to the unemployment insurance (UI) unit over the spring and summer, effectively halting progress on the bulk of our cases.

A significant number of our members are completely out of work now or have seen their hours drastically reduced. The overwhelming majority are excluded from unemployment insurance because of their immigration status. A significant share of the workers who are eligible to collect UI or Pandemic Unemployment Assistance have faced huge barriers to accessing their benefits: NYSDOL's phone intake systems were overwhelmed during the height of pandemic-related unemployment, and many workers simply could not get through; other workers could not use the on-line application system because it was not available in languages other than English or because they did not have access to a computer or smart phone.

In light of the challenges we have described above, MRNY respectfully requests that the New York City Council prioritize the following measures:

Ensure Access to Relief Programs for Excluded Workers

The City should create publicly-funded disaster relief programs that provide reliable, adequate, and ongoing financial assistance to those excluded from existing relief programs, including community members who are excluded from unemployment benefits on the basis of their immigration status and recently incarcerated individuals who lack the work history necessary to qualify for unemployment benefits.

Increase Funding for Legal Services for Workers Subjected to Wage Theft and Abuse in the Workplace

Unprecedented levels of unemployment and economic distress make workers in low-wage industries, a large portion of whom are immigrants, even more vulnerable to workplace abuse. Given the increased vulnerability of immigrant workers now, the City must increase funding for pro bono legal services to ensure that all immigrant workers who have been cheated out of wages, discriminated against in the workplace, or been subjected to health and safety violations at work have access to representation to seek redress. In particular, the City should stabilize and increase funding for programs such as the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative and the Low-Wage Worker Support initiative in order to support a robust network of community-based organizations (CBOs) and legal providers to train, support, and represent workers in litigation and administrative proceedings.

Leverage Municipal Power as Market Participant to Disincentivize Forced Arbitration Clauses and other Nefarious Employer Practices

The City should demand disclosure and transparency from businesses that use anti-worker practices such as forced arbitration clauses, non-disclosure policies that silence whistleblowers, or other unfair or abusive labor practices. The City should use its power as a market participant to reward fair, transparent, and equitable workplaces with its business.

Implement legal protections against firing workers without "Just Cause"

The City should extend to all workers protections from being fired without "just cause", building

upon the recently-passed legislation providing this critical right to fast food workers. Under the current “at-will” employment scheme, employers enjoy free rein to fire a worker for any reason or not reason at all, so long as the employer’s justification is not otherwise prohibited by an anti-discrimination statute or other law. Moreover, the burden falls on workers to prove that their the reason for their firing was unlawful. With few safeguards from arbitrary dismissal, workers are hesitant to speak up about workplace concerns or violations. The pandemic has highlighted the extreme risks that at-will employment poses not only to workers, but also to communities: workers without the confidence to challenge a lack of personal protective equipment, overcrowding, or rising infection rates in their workplaces may feel compelled to continue laboring in unsafe conditions, and risk transmitting the virus to their families, neighbors, and fellow commuters. Just cause will provide New Yorkers with a fair chance at stable employment, and especially for the countless essential workers who have kept New York running during the pandemic.

We thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony and look forward to working with the City Council to protect workers’ rights during the pandemic and beyond.

Sarah Leberstein
Supervising Attorney, Workplace Justice Legal Team
Make the Road New York
sarah.leberstein@maketheroadny.org

I've been an employee at the Times Square Marriott Marquis in the Food & Beverage department for 16 years. I, like many other hotel workers, have been furloughed since March 2020 due to Covid restrictions and the lack of hotel business resulting from the pandemic. While my furlough was scheduled to continue until at least March 2021, on December 9th I received a letter from Marriott informing me that my job was in fact being terminated as of March 12, 2021 along with 850 other Marquis long time employees (average number of years 20+). I'm now concerned that I, along with the others have no job or medical benefits to go back to when the covid restrictions start to lift. Also concerning is a recent action Marriott has taken when it comes to severance payments to employees. The Marquis is a Marriott property run in conjunction with a group called Host Marriott. Host Marriott also owns the Copley Hotel in Boston. Last month, Host terminated over 200 employees at the Copley, and tried to pay them half the severance Marriott usually provides. You may have seen articles about this; officials in Boston are getting involved in this situation. I and my fellow employees are gravely concerned that at a time when unemployment will be running out and the job market has not bounced back, we will have to provide for ourselves and our families from what severance payments we are given. If these payments are cut back, this could lead to even more hardship. Of these 850 employees most are of a certain age where finding a new career is almost impossible. We dedicated our lives to this Hotel and now when things are tough for everyone they kick us to the curb. They are posting profits and opening hotels in other countries and we are struggling to feed ourselves and our families. We are a diverse group of employees from every race and economic background. Given that the hotel industry has lobbied to be part of Covid federal relief, it seems ridiculous that severance packages would be cut. Some politicians and industry leaders in Massachusetts are opposing the severance cuts. Also being organized is a 'Right of Recall' act for laid off workers; California passed the same type of law as did Philadelphia. This would give laid off employees such as myself the right to their jobs back when business resumes up to 24 months after layoff. I think in the case of the hospitality industry in New York this makes sense as well. We know tourism is coming back in New York at some point. Hard-working employees, deserve an opportunity to get their positions back after all we are living through. The Right of Recall was just passed in New Haven Connecticut. RIGHT OF RECALL covers hotels, restaurants, music venues, bars, sports venues and other various entities. We need your help to get this passed in NYC! Many employees are contacting their city and state representatives, and I am contacting you to see if you are aware of this situation, and if the city can provide any support to Marriott employees in this position. We also have State Senator Hoylman backing us, who has Times Square in his district.

Los Angeles
Philadelphia
Boston
New Haven

These cities have passed Right of Recall, now we have to pass it!
We are New York City the greatest city in the world we need to be together on this issue. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Thank you
Pete Dorton

To the New York City Council

A PLEA FOR HELP On behalf of the Associates of THE NEW YORK CITY MARRIOTT MARQUIS TIMES SQUARE

To the members of the New York City Council:

Several Associates who have been given termination notices by the Marriott Marquis have already been in touch with many New York City Council members. We appreciate your responses in these trying times. We know Right to Recall is just being considered in New York City, and would once again like to state our case, with the support of many more associates, as well as family and friends who understand the crisis this represents for associates affected by these 850 job terminations that are scheduled to become permanent on March 12, 2021. We have signed below to offer our support and hope that Right to Recall can become a reality not only for us, but for many New Yorkers in industries across the City who are hoping to return to work as the Covid Pandemic eases and business comes back.

A Call for a Right to Recall Ordinance in NYC, to protect NYC workers against corporate greed and manipulation:

- There is a very real problem which jeopardizes the jobs and stability of NYC's minorities, women, and aging workforce. The very families which have made companies great for years and form the backbone of NYC are being outsourced for younger, cheaper labor. These jobs have often been held for decades by the NYC workforce. A workforce disproportionately composed of women and minorities. **We need this ordinance to protect NYCs most vulnerable: women, minorities, and the aging.**
- NYC needs a city ordinance such as the ordinance passed in Philadelphia under the banner of "Black Jobs Matter". According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, most hospitality workers are Black, Asian or Latino. There is a real concern that they could face discrimination in hiring for race and age after a prolonged period of unemployment. This ordinance guarantees Right to Recall for jobs that return through 2025.
- Over 2/3rd of the workforce at the NY Marriott Marquis had their jobs terminated, and many will be outsourced to another company. Outsourcing for NYC Marriott and Host Hotel owned properties is a corporate policy which has been implemented for years by them. We are aware that changing the legal name of the owners to outsource affects not only us, but many others who are losing their jobs in hospitality. **We need to protect the 850 people at the NY Marriott Marquis and those workers in other hospitality and service jobs to prevent owners from maximizing shareholder profit disguised as a response to the Pandemic disaster.**

- Similar city ordinances have been enacted in not only Philadelphia but also in Baltimore, New Haven, Los Angeles, and 3 other California cities. Additionally, a Right to Recall ordinance is in the process of being passed in Las Vegas and Boston. **NYC workers need and deserve similar protection.**
- NYC workers have developed the very businesses which are now casting them to the curb. One employee remarked, “give me Covid it just hurts me, but outsourcing kills my entire family”. **Please protect workers who have built businesses from opportunistic corporate greed.**

For all of the above reasons, we implore the New York City Council to enact a Right to Recall ordinance for NYC



32BJ SEIU Testimony
City Council Hearing - Committee on Civil Service and Labor
“The State of Labor During COVID-19”
Wednesday January 27th, 2020

Good morning Chair Miller and members of the subcommittee. My name is Mark Anthony Espinoza and I’ve been a 32BJ member for 13 years. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I’d like to begin by offering my heartfelt condolences to the families of 32BJ members lost to the Coronavirus pandemic. My thoughts and prayers are with the survivors dealing with the tragic loss of loved ones and co-workers.

The damage of COVID-19 highlights the differences in our city’s workforce. While the race to contain the virus continues, white-collar workers are able to move their work spaces to their homes as states ask employers to offer flexible work arrangements. Unfortunately, this is a very different lived reality than blue-collar workers whose jobs require them work in-person.

In addition to being disproportionately exposed to the novel coronavirus, these workers are also more likely to experience lack of access to quality and affordable healthcare, poor working conditions, and exploitive management policies. Day in and day out, essential workers continue to show up despite these circumstances and keep our city running.

32BJ represents service workers across numerous divisions including airports, commercial, residential, security, and schools, the latter of which I’ve worked in for 15 years. In my experience as a cleaner, earning a prevailing wage and having access to quality, affordable health insurance has been crucial to my family’s security, especially during the pandemic. Because of our health insurance, my wife was able to receive support throughout her pregnancy and safely deliver our newborn daughter. As a new family, we were not burdened with the cost of an expensive hospital bill. Because of the benefits I get from my job, we can live without worry.

My heart goes out to workers who don’t have access to workplace protections such as hazard pay, health insurance, paid time off, life insurance, or disability benefits as they navigate working in person through the Coronavirus pandemic. We owe proper compensation and benefits to the essential workers who put their lives at risk to ensure that New York City will survive and recover from COVID-19.

Thank you for your time.

Gloria Puma

Trabajadora del hogar

Miembro de Proyecto de Justicia Laboral

¡Buenos días! Mi nombre Gloria Puma, soy miembro del Proyecto Justicia Laboral. Estoy acá para hablar en nombre de las trabajadoras del hogar que se han mantenido al frente durante la pandemia

Llevo 6 años trabajando en el área de la limpieza. Han sido 6 años de lucha con la comunidad Jasídica, en donde aún nos pagan \$11 dolares la hora. En donde aún no nos quieren proveer con nuestro equipo de protección necesaria para protegernos de los fuertes químicos que se usan para desinfectar el área.

Durante la pandemia, muchas de nosotras nos quedamos sin trabajo ya sea porque nos contagiarnos del covid 19 o porque no teníamos dónde dejar a nuestros hijos ya que las escuelas estaban cerradas y no teníamos cómo pagar una niñera. Fueron unos meses de lucha sin trabajo, dinero y dificultad a la nueva norma de escuela virtual.

A pesar de exponernos al contagio del Coronavirus, teníamos que continuar con nuestra labor como trabajadoras del hogar. Fueron meses muy difíciles porque varios de estos empleadores de la comunidad Jasídica no creía en el Coronavirus. Algunos empleadores no nos dejaban usar mascarillas dentro de sus casas. Esto nos hacía aún más vulnerables al virus ya que las familias estaban en casa. No solo nos ponía a nosotras si no a nuestra familia.

Las condiciones de trabajo cada vez son más inseguras e inhumanas. Desde años atrás venimos luchando contra estos empleadores abusivos ante salarios mal pagados, donde no nos pagan días de enfermedad y estamos expuestas al acoso sexual

porque no ahí nada que nos ampare como las demás industrias. Por medio del Proyecto de justicia laboral he aprendido sobre mis derechos laborales, capacitandome tomando varios cursos con OSHA 30, SST y también salir a trabajar mediante el centro de contratación por la cual es más respetada por los empleadores.

Por todos esos años de lucha queremos ver que seamos escuchadas. Y pedimos urgentemente protecciones básicas para poder trabajar con seguridad y dignidad. Nuestras peticiones son simples y muy posibles.

1. Salarios justos y razonables
2. Protecciones de la industria
3. Trato digno por parte del empleador
4. Acceso a equipos de protección de salud y seguridad

Somos miles de trabajadoras del hogar las que enfrentamos estos problemas. Poco a poco nos estamos uniendo, organizando y luchando. Aquí estamos y no nos vamos!

Gloria Puma

Domestic worker

Member of the Workers Justice Project (WJP)

Good Afternoon. My name is Gloria Puma. I'm a member of the Workers Justice Project. I'm here to speak on behalf of domestic workers who have remained at the frontlines of this pandemic.

I have been working in the cleaning area for 6 years. It has been 6 years of struggle with the Hasidic community, where they still pay us \$ 11 an hour. Where we are still not provided by the employer protective equipment to protect us from the strong chemicals that are used to disinfect an area.

During the pandemic, many of us were left without work either because we caught COVID-19 and because we had nowhere to leave our children since schools were closed and we had no way to pay for a babysitter. We struggled for months without work, money, difficulty with the new virtual school norm.

Despite exposing ourselves to the virus, we have continued our work as domestic workers. They were very difficult months because several of these employers from the Hasidic community did not believe in the Coronavirus. Some employers would not let us wear masks inside their homes. This made us even more vulnerable to the virus since the families were at home. He not only put us but our family as well.

Working conditions are increasingly unsafe and inhumane. For years we have been fighting against these abusive employers in the face of poorly paid wages, where they do not pay us sick days and we are exposed to sexual harassment because there is nothing that protects us like other industries. Through the Workers Justice Project I have learned about my labor rights, training myself by taking several courses like OSHA 30, SST and also going to work through the hiring center for which it is more respected by employers.

For all those years of struggle we want to see that we are heard, and we urgently ask for basic protections to be able to work with safety and dignity. Our requests are simple and very possible.

1. Wages that are fair and reasonable
2. Industry protections
3. Dignified treatment by the employer
4. Access to health and safety equipment and protections

We are thousands of domestic workers who face these problems. We are slowly uniting, organizing and fighting to protect our rights. We are here. We are not leaving!

I have been an employee of Marriott International for 20 years, mostly as a server and bartender, first at the Downtown Marriott hotel and then at the Marriott Marquis. In 2012 when hurricane Sandy came to NY I was employed at the Downtown Marriott and that hotel flooded. They had a meeting with us exactly one month after the hurricane to tell us that they were outsourcing the restaurant where I had worked at for 12 years. There was a severance given to us and a payment of 90 days vacation pay because they did not tell us in advance they were letting us go. My severance at that point was one week per year that I had worked at the company which was 12 weeks. We asked for help to retain positions with the new company or to be placed in other hotels in NYC and the answer was NO. This hotel was a non union hotel at that point and actually this January 2021 they finally received the union there.

I found out there was a position open at the Marriott Marquis in January 2013 and applied to it and received a position at the Crossroads restaurant on the 8th floor of the hotel. Later on I applied to a position as a lounge server which is the position I held when I was furloughed. We had construction at the hotel for about two years and in June of 2020 the area where I worked was scheduled to be totally redesigned and revamped. We had meetings with management telling us dates of initiation and termination of construction. We were told our area would most likely be under construction from June 2020 to a target date of November 2020. In March most of the hotel was furloughed because of the pandemic restrictions but in May the restrictions became less restricted and construction started in May, one month early. We were constantly being updated about what was going on with Covid 19 and the construction at the hotel. In December we received a letter telling us we were going to be terminated as of March 12, exactly one year after our furlough started. Now my question is, If we had a scheduled construction why is Covid 19 being used as an excuse to terminate us just like they did to me back in 2012? I understand business is slower but the hotel is letting all of the food and beverage employees go. That includes the banquet department, bars, restaurants, starbucks, all the kitchens, all 852 of us. This is again not a real reason just like before. If business is down you lay off SOME employees not ALL. I am giving you my back story because I see a trend here. Marriott is using the excuse of a horrible situation to benefit of the fact that non union employees have no protection.

After we were all told we were terminated as of March 2021, the union included the Marriott Marquis housekeeping department in. But only the housekeepers are in the union as of now. We need the Right To Recall passed in NYC to stop companies like Marriott from taking advantage of these situations and get rid of their employees whom have worked for more than 35 years for the company. I myself have worked for the company 20 years and because I have been through this before, I can tell you it is not easy being told that you are no longer needed in a place where you have worked your whole life. It is disheartening and earth shattering, you feel helpless and let down. This cannot keep happening and go unpunished. We need to be protected and know that we will not lose our jobs because we are older or because we are receiving too much benefits. This is unfair and we need help!

Hilda Guzman