
Communications
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AFL-CIO, DISTRICT 1

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OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

April 15, 2020

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

Once again, I am forced to write to you and your Administration regarding CWA's anger and frustration over the mistreatment of nearly 3000 Traffic Enforcement Agents and Supervisors during the Covid-19 crisis.

As you are undoubtedly aware, I wrote to Commissioner Campion on March 26th regarding a series of issues affecting the TEAs during this crisis, including "hazard pay," leave arrangements for those who are ill or who have an ill family member, and lunch and rest room accommodations for the agents while they are in the field. After an inexplicable delay of 8 days, the Commissioner wrote back acknowledging my concerns, but essentially denying all of the union's requests on these issues.

Now, however, an even more infuriating situation has arisen. On April 1, the City issued new guidelines on paid leave for city workers during the crisis. This document interprets how new federal guidelines will be incorporated into city policies authorizing fully paid leave for workers diagnosed with Covid-19 or subject to quarantine, and partially paid leave to care for a relative or child who is sick or quarantined, or to provide child care for a child who lacks alternative arrangements.

The document clearly states that NYC "Health Care Providers" and "Emergency Responders" are ineligible to utilize the Excused Partially Paid Leave programs. A specific list of job titles covered under these two categories is provided—**and Traffic Enforcement Agents are NOT included.** Instead Traffic Agents are mentioned separately, in a subsequent section of the document, under a category of Essential Service Providers involved in "Life Protecting, Life Safety, Transportation and Utilities." These "Essential Service Providers" are clearly distinguished from "Health Care Providers" and "Emergency Responders."

Based on this information, and based on assurances CWA received from Police Department officials over the last two weeks about the pending implementation of this policy, we have told the TEAs that they will be eligible to take advantage of **all** of these leave programs. Some have already taken leave to care for children based on these assurances, anticipating retroactive pay to April 1. We have been repeatedly reassured that the PD was about to issue guidelines for the implementation of these citywide policies for department employees.

Yesterday, however, CWA was shocked to learn that the document we received on April 1st is apparently incorrect, and that the TEAs will in fact be treated as “first responders,” and therefore are ineligible to utilize the partially paid leave provisions. As I stated in my letter to the Commissioner on March 26th, I remain hard-pressed to understand how writing parking tickets can be considered an “essential service,” let alone how these low-paid employees—designated as civilians at the bargaining table, but as uniformed “first responders” in time of crisis—can be deprived of leave granted to the vast majority of city employees. In defending the city’s designation of TEAs and Supervisors as “essential employees” in her letter to me on April 3, Commissioner Campion compared the Traffic Agents to School Crossing Guards and Safety Agents, among others. However, to add insult to injury, we recently learned that these School Safety Agents, who also work for the NYPD, have been granted rotating schedules of two weeks on and two weeks off at full pay. No such opportunity has been afforded to our members, even though traffic has greatly diminished and the number of parking tickets issued has plummeted since the onset of social distancing

There is a clear pattern here: when it comes to pay and respect, Traffic Agents and Supervisors are treated as disposable, second-class citizens. They are among the lowest paid workers in the NYC workforce. But when an emergency or potential emergency arises—a terrorist attack or life-threatening weather conditions, and now the Covid-19 crisis—the City expects these workers to step up just like much, much higher paid police and firefighters. Our members will rightfully be incensed when they learn that they have been arbitrarily denied access to the leave programs made available to the overwhelming majority of the “civilian” workforce, after months at the bargaining table during which city negotiators insisted that TEAs and Supervisors are in fact “civilians.”

Your Administration’s continued unfair treatment of these workers is unacceptable to CWA. Three of these workers have already died of Covid-19, and many, many more are sick. They are being treated callously and misleadingly. Their level of frustration knows no bounds.

Action by your Administration to address these concerns is long overdue; it is time to grant the TEAs and Supervisors the rights and respect they deserve. Once again, we demand that the TEAs be paid comparably to the police and firefighter “first responders” alongside whom they are dutifully serving. Members of Local 1181 and 1182 should be given “hazard pay” to compensate them for their “emergency” responsibilities in this crisis. We look forward to negotiating with you over this demand at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis G. Trainor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dennis Trainor
Vice President, CWA District One

cc: Renee Campion, Commissioner, Office of Labor Relations
Dermot Shea, Commissioner, NYPD

