

ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE



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92 Franklin Street - 4th Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

March 21, 2018

Hon. Mark C. Poloncarz
Erie County Executive
95 Franklin Street – 16th Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

Re: Request for meeting between Child Protective Services Caseworkers and County Administration

Dear Executive Poloncarz,

As you know, the Department of Social Services Child Protection Services (CPS) caseworkers have the emotionally and physically draining task of investigating instances of suspected child abuse throughout Erie County. These caseworkers are suffering. They work long hours with little appreciation, and have been seeking solutions to their plight.

As you also are aware, turnover among caseworker is excessive, which has led to increased costs and a dearth of experienced employees. This shortage of more seasoned caseworkers has fed back into the turnover cycle as new caseworkers are forced to absorb larger caseloads before they are adequately prepared and more experienced workers are in a constant state of case overload.

These caseworkers, despite being under threat of unemployment, have repeatedly requested a sit-down with the administration to discuss their situation. Several letters have been submitted to the Legislature in an attempt to bring everyone to the table to negotiate. One submission even contains research comparing our CPS department to departments in other counties. Their numbers show that Erie County's caseload per worker and turnover rate are in excess of the New York State average, while Erie County caseworker salaries are far below those of their colleagues across New York.

In the past several months, the Legislature has passed Resolution Intro. 23-4 (2017) supporting a raise for their division of two job groups and has held several widely attended discussions. There has been little contention from members of the Department's administration that the job raises could be offset with cuts to the department, provided that turnover does in fact decrease.

In repeated discussions with the caseworkers, they have advised that they have requested a meeting with your office, the Department of Labor Relations, and CSEA President Denise Szymura. However, no meeting has been scheduled. The workers feel that they are being pushed off or ignored. We write this letter to demand a meeting occur within two weeks from the date of this letter.

We cannot delay any longer; the CPS department provides services that can be the difference between life or death of children in our county. If the situation persists as is, it will only be a matter of time before another death or serious injury occurs to a child who should be under the county's protection.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and would like to offer any needed assistance to facilitate a meeting.

Sincerely,


Joseph C. Loris


Kevin R. Hardwick


Edward A. Rath, III


John J. Mills


Lynne M. Dixon