



STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW

ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

November 27, 2020

Hon. April Baskin
Erie County Legislature Chairwoman
92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Chairwoman Baskin,

A situation of great concern has come to the attention of the Erie County Comptroller's Office that you need to be made aware of. My office received information from our Whistleblower Hotline that another high-ranking Commissioner in the Administration of Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz has tested positive for COVID-19. According to the complainant, the Commissioner not only attended meetings over the last several months while not wearing a mask, but it is possible this person contracted COVID-19 while traveling to a hunting camp around many other individuals.

While positive COVID cases are to be expected among some Erie County employees, the lack of transparency and continued secrecy on the part of the Poloncarz Administration is very troubling. Not sharing information in a timely manner can potentially put others at risk.

I would point out that the County Executive and Governor continue to penalize businesses, and tell people how many friends or family members they can allow into their own home. County Executive Poloncarz has even encouraged people to turn their neighbors in if they don't follow their made up guidelines, by calling a complaint hotline phone number they created to handle COVID violations.

"Based on what I've seen in the past I fully expect people to call our hotline. I've had people call our hotline before."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, www.youtube.com, Erie County Executive News Conference, 11/12/20

"Limit your gatherings for Thanksgiving to your immediate family. Do not travel. Don't invite visitors from outside the area for that matter, truthfully, outside your home here. You put them at risk. They put you at risk."

Source: Mark C. Poloncarz, www.youtube.com, Erie County Executive News Conference, 11/12/20

“We know indoor gatherings and parties are a major source of COVID spread. To slow the spread, NYS will limit indoor gatherings at private residences to 10 people.”

Source: Governor Andrew Cuomo, www.twitter.com, 11/11/20

As the Governor and County Executive threaten the livelihoods of many small business owners in New York State, and worse, tell the people of Erie County and the state who they can invite into their own homes, top officials in the Poloncarz Administration are ignoring the rules others are required to follow.

Questions remain. Was your Honorable Body notified of this individual testing positive for COVID-19? Was Rath Building staff notified? If so, when? If not, then why the delay?

If the Commissioner did in fact not abide by the same mask-wearing directives everyone else is required to follow, was disciplinary action taken? What protocols are now in place concerning this Commissioner? What steps has the Health Department taken to ensure the safety of other county employees who work with this Commissioner? Was anyone from the private sector that does business with Erie County potentially exposed?

I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter. As always, my Office stands ready to help in any way we can. The safety of the public, as well as our Erie County workforce should be a top priority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stefan I. Mychajliw, Jr.', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon. Stefan I. Mychajliw, Jr.
Erie County Comptroller