



ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

HON. STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW

October 6, 2020

Gale Burstein, MD
Commissioner
Erie County Department of Health
95 Franklin Street
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Dr. Burstein,

It has come to the attention of the Office of Erie County Comptroller via the Whistleblower Hotline that a positive COVID-19 case has been linked to an individual working at a county leased building at 460 Main Street in Buffalo, specifically on the second floor. As you are aware, that location is utilized by Erie County's Department of Social Services, as well as Probation and private entities. The email we believe originated from the County of Erie to county employees working at 460 Main Street reads as follows:

Greetings All-

We have been informed that an employee of Erie County working at 460 Main St. - 2nd Floor has tested positive for COVID-19. Our affected colleague is recovering at home, and we send our best wishes for a speedy return to health.

We understand that this news will cause concern among the other employees at 460 Main - 2nd Floor. Rest assured that Ellicott Development has taken special care to disinfect the work area frequented by our affected colleague. The affected person, as well as administration, will be working with the DOH to provide appropriate information and notification as needed.

Given that any employee at 460 Main St - 2nd floor, may have interacted with the COVID-19 positive individual, we are reinforcing the need for all staff to continue self-monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms as recommended by the Erie County Department of Health and CDC. You can monitor your health by taking your temperature two times per day and watching for cough or shortness of breath. If you experience a temperature of 100.4 or higher, a cough, or shortness of breath, please contact your primary care provider.

In addition to self-monitoring, staff should continue to engage in rigorous hygiene practices including:

- ***Washing your hands often and correctly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.***
- ***Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.***
- ***Maintain current physical distancing of 6 feet from those outside your immediate family.***
- ***Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you do not have a tissue use your elbow not your hands.***
- ***Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.***
- ***Wearing a face mask when at work and when in public areas where you may be unable to maintain z physical distance of 6 feet.***

Finally, if you are not feeling well, please stay at home to recover. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to our clients and to each other. <End email>

As far as we are aware, information surrounding the positive COVID of an individual at the county leased building at 460 Main Street in Buffalo test has not been made public. This raises numerous concerns and questions, including but not limited to:

- What are the dates and times when the individual that tested positive for COVID was in the building at 460 Main Street?
- When did the COVID-19 test come back positive to the County of Erie and the Erie County Health Department?
- How much time lapsed between knowledge of the positive COVID test at 460 Main Street and when staff were notified?
- When were all clients or non-county workers notified of this positive COVID test?
- When did contact tracers begin the process of tracking this specific case?
- Have contact tracers notified all people that were inside 460 Main Street now that a positive COVID case has been confirmed?
- Is testing, rapid or otherwise, being provided to employees, clients and guests who were at the building recently?
- When is the County of Erie notifying the public about this positive COVID test?
- What is being done to reach out to any employees, clients and anyone who may have entered the building?
- Why has the news of this positive COVID test remain a secret, when the county has been quite vocal about previous positive COVID cases across the community?
- What preventive measures are being put in place considering county employees, and others, can be in close proximity of one another and utilize shared spaces like elevators, conference rooms and restrooms?
- What is the plan to contact trace all the people that visited HEAP, Probation, etc?
- What is the risk of cross contamination of anyone working at 460 Main Street and the Rath Building.
- Will the County of Erie now take temperatures of any individual entering county buildings?
- How many confirmed COVID-19 tests have there been among the county workforce?
- How many positive COVID cases have there been of employees working in the Rath Building?

Thank you very much for your prompt attention to this very serious matter. Taxpayers and the Office of Erie County Comptroller look forward to hearing your responses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stefan I. Mychajliw Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stefan I. Mychajliw Jr.
Erie County Comptroller

CC: Erie County Legislature