



STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW

ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

March 15, 2021

Mr. Timothy Hogues
Commissioner
Personnel Department
95 Franklin Street, 6th Floor
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Commissioner Hogues,

Per a memo from your office, Erie County has launched an effort to vaccinate county government employees following a directive from New York State Gov. Andrew Cuomo. Specifically, the Governor announced that all public/government employees are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine as early as Wednesday, March 17, 2021.

Before and throughout the statewide vaccination rollout, the Governor's priorities have been quite questionable. Sending the elderly stricken with COVID into nursing homes was a death sentence for 15,000 seniors. Now Governor Cuomo adds government bureaucrats to the eligibility list while those most in need of the vaccine are forced to wait weeks or even months.

The process to obtain a vaccination appointment has failed numerous taxpayers. Thousands of appointments were cancelled. Vaccination shortages are still commonplace. As such, in response to Erie County's announcement that it will vaccinate government employees, I am waiving my access to a vaccination. Instead, I want "my" vaccination to help a seriously immune compromised individual.

Mr. Charles "Chuckie" Sonntag is a cancer survivor and double amputee. As a child, he was diagnosed with polycystic fibrosis dysplasia. Although he qualifies for the vaccination due to comorbidities and health conditions, the earliest time he could secure a vaccination is May 29, 2021.

It is unconscionable Governor Cuomo is making vaccinations available to government bureaucrats starting this week, yet a double amputee, cancer survivor with polycystic fibrosis dysplasia, the definition of someone being immune compromised, has to wait months for a shot.

Mr. Sonntag underwent an amputation last spring, and faced another directive from Governor Cuomo that most certainly would have put his life at risk. Following surgery, he was ordered to be transferred to a nursing home facility for recovery. Fortunately, family and friends stepped in to prevent that.

Like the thousands of other New Yorkers desperately seeking access to the vaccine, Mr. Sonntag is a valuable member of our community and much more than a number or a list of conditions on a sheet of paper. He is one of the Buffalo Bills' biggest backers and heavily involved with children's charities.

After facing a legal battle over use of the name, "the 12th Man," he secured tickets for at-risk youth to attend Bills games. Often children from the Arlene Mychajliw Seneca Babcock Community Center attend professional football games because of Mr. Sonntag's generosity.

Vaccinations should be available to all that want one, including government employees. However, to put young, healthy government workers ahead of individuals like Mr. Sonntag and others in his situation is just plain wrong.

I am requesting that Mr. Sonntag receive the vaccination that would have been designated for me. However, if that is not possible, I urge Dr. Gale Burstein and Erie County to review this situation, and others like Mr. Sonntag, and do everything conceivable to vaccinate him as soon possible.

We must protect the most vulnerable first. This is why Mr. Sonntag should receive a vaccination in my place. Thank you in advance for considering my request and doing everything in your power to help Mr. Sonntag.

Sincerely,



STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW
Erie County Comptroller

CC: Dr. Gale Burstein, Commissioner of Erie County Health Department
Dr. Howard A. Zucker is Commissioner of Health for New York State
Mr. Thomas J. Quatroche Jr., President/CEO of ECMCC
Mr. Mark Sullivan, President/CEO of Catholic Health
Mr. Robert J. Nesselbush, CEO of Kaleida Health
Dr. Candace S. Johnson, President/CEO of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center
Dr. Eric Bieber, President/CEO of Rochester Regional Health
President Satish K. Tripathi, University at Buffalo