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COVID OVERTIME AND FOOD COSTS CONTINUE TO SOAR

Office of Erie County Comptroller updates "COVID Checkbook" on escalating spending

(ERIE COUNTY, NY) – The Administration of Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz continues to spend Federal CARES Act dollars on overtime and food for employees and political appointees, with costs consistently escalating towards the end of the fiscal year, December 31st. According to the latest data, more than \$4.6 million has been spent on overtime and almost \$230,000 on food purchases with federal funds intended to be used to address COVID related issues.

Most recent data available shows that \$4,626,55 in overtime has been charged to the CARES Act fund, for 972 employees working 89,000 overtime hours. Of that amount, \$1,020,910 in overtime was paid to 56 political appointees. The highest paid continues to be Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein, who has taken in \$158,485 in overtime and holiday pay, in addition to her annual salary of \$202,312.

"Erie County punitively punishes businesses with COVID fines. The Poloncarz Administration is destroying small businesses, while lining the pockets of the politically connected. Some salaried, political appointees earned more overtime in nine months than most blue-collar workers make in five years. People are struggling. Many lost jobs, even their homes. The Health Commissioner continues to cash in on the COVID pandemic. At the same time her department barges into businesses accompanied by police, shutting them down and issuing fines. Cutting off people's ability to make a living, while almost doubling her own salary," said Erie County Comptroller Stefan Mychajliw.

In addition to the overtime bill, the Poloncarz Administration is also spending considerable COVID funds to feed Erie County employees and political appointees, often during a normal workday. As of December 4, 2020, approximately \$227,517.67 in COVID funds were spent to purchase food. Some of those food purchases include raw pork, pots and pans, and cutlery. A total of \$44,320.01 has been spent at one pizzeria, and another \$34,592.88 at one area bar and grill.

"When the federal government sent Erie County \$160 million to protect our community from COVID, is this what they wanted CARES Act recovery funds to be spent on? Overtime, holiday pay and food for salaried, political workers? The Poloncarz Administration uses tax dollars to feed and enrich the paychecks of the well connected. Businesses close. COVID numbers surge. Yet the Poloncarz Administration pats itself on the back," concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.

The Erie County Comptroller's office will continue to monitor how the Administration spends federal CARES Act funds. For a link to the COVID checkbook, go to [Taxpayer Checkbook \(www.erie.gov\)](http://www.erie.gov).

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