



# STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW

## ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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Contact – Office of Erie County Comptroller, 854-8400

### **COMPTROLLER CALLS ON HEALTH COMMISSIONER TO RELEASE DATA ON COVID FINES AND PENALTIES**

*Inquiry prompted by complaints to whistleblower hotline following photos of the County Executive not wearing a mask, not social distancing and sharing communal food*

**(ERIE COUNTY, NY)** -- Erie County Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw Jr. is requesting Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein to provide information to the public on COVID policies in Erie County, especially how it relates to the punishment of businesses for not complying with Coronavirus related guidelines.

In a letter sent to Dr. Burstein, the Comptroller states he is seeking this clarification after several complaints were made to the whistleblower hotline regarding potential violations and issues associated with shutdowns, fines, warnings and other actions connected to the pandemic. Numerous complaints were received following Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz being photographed with a group of almost 20 men not wearing a mask, not social distancing, drinking alcohol and sharing communal food.

“It appears there are one set of rules for Mark Poloncarz and another set of rules for struggling business owners. The County Executive also said health protocols state there’s no fear of spreading COVID-19 if contact with someone is ten minutes or less. Did businesses that were fined, punished or closed receive a ten-minute grace period? Why are masks still required if someone runs in and out of a store to shop in less than ten minutes? Why are masks still required in restaurants if a short walk to the restroom is less than ten minutes?”

“People are not happy with the Erie County Executive disrupting their lives by forcing mask orders on our community. He’s not even following the rules he himself put in place. In order to respond to these taxpayers in the best way possible, my office needs to provide the public with this data,” said Comptroller Mychajliw.

The inquiry requests specific information on rules and regulations required of businesses to implement, Erie County Health Department policies related to COVID, businesses and organizations that have received warnings, or were cited or fined for COVID-related violations, and the amount of fines levied for those businesses or organizations.

“The public has the right to know the amount in fines paid by businesses and organizations punished under rules created by Mark Poloncarz. I will let lawmakers know how well people and businesses are adhering to COVID policies, as well as how they’ve been hurt financially,” concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.

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