

February 26, 2021

Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez
Office of the Chancellor
205 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Dear Chancellor Matos Rodríguez:

As leaders of labor unions in New York City, we value The City University of New York as a unique resource for working people. Thousands of our members and their families are able to earn college degrees, gain new skills and reimagine their lives because of CUNY. We look forward to continuing the strong partnerships many of our unions have with the University.

But we were disturbed to learn that you have refused to pay the contractual equity increases negotiated by the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY. The affected titles are among the lowest-paid full-time faculty and staff represented by the PSC, and they include high proportions of women and people of color. The increases were explicitly designed to narrow gaps in salary that develop over time and address inequities of gender and race.

Not only did you fail to implement the raise, you also failed to notify the union in advance, request negotiations on the issue, or even inform the employees that you had decided to violate the contract. You have provided no information about when—or whether—the raise will be paid.

These staff and faculty are the wives, daughters, mothers and brothers of our members. They have been on the front lines at CUNY during the pandemic, dedicating many unpaid hours to enabling students to receive the services, instruction and support they need during this crisis. At the same time they have been navigating their own stressful lives as part of the communities hit hardest by COVID. It is unconscionable not to pay them the increases negotiated by their union and included in the contract settlement.

We are especially concerned that a university that has professed a public commitment to working people and anti-racism has refused to pay a contractual increase aimed at racial equity. CUNY should set the highest standards of ethical treatment of its own workers—not a dangerous precedent of breaking a contract at will.

Contractual provisions are legal requirements; they are not optional. That the decision to withhold the equity raises came on top of a prior decision to enforce the State's freeze on salary increases makes it even more alarming.

We call on you to reverse your decision immediately. CUNY must pay the equity increment and any retroactive portion without further delay, and must make a public commitment to implement the remaining equity increases in the contract with the PSC. New York's working people rely on CUNY, and CUNY relies on its workers. Honor the union contract.

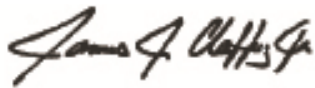
Thank you for your attention and your prompt response.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Stuart Applebaum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stuart" being more prominent and the last name "Applebaum" following in a similar style.

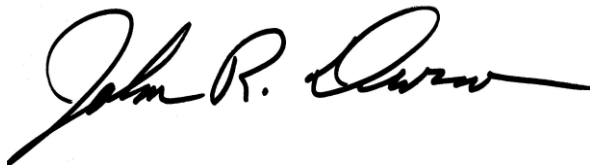
Stuart Applebaum
President, RWDSU



Robert Bonanza
Business Manager, LIUNA Mason Tenders District Council



James J. Claffey, Jr.
President, IATSE Local 1 Stagehands



John Durso
President, RWDSU Local 338, UFCW



Mark Henry
President, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1056



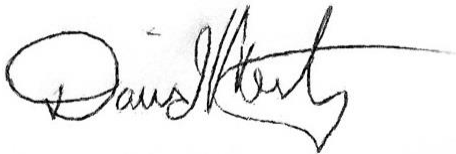
Julie Kelly
General Manager, NY/NJ Joint Board of Workers United



Gary La Barbera
President, Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York



James Mahoney
President, New York State District Council of Ironworkers



David Mertz
Director for New York City, RWDSU/UFCW



George Miranda
President, International Brotherhood of Teamsters Joint Council 16