October 6th, 2021

MCOFU MEMBERSHIP UPDATE – CBA and VACCINE MANDATE INFO

1. Successor Collective Bargaining Agreement – Finally, some good news to report. Pending ratification by you, our membership, the MCOFU Executive Board has agreed on a successor contract, the highlights of which are the wage increases for our members, along with ADDED language to the sick notes to benefit our membership. Despite any interpretations otherwise, nothing was removed from the illness certification form. A letter from the President, along with the language changes, a financial synopsis, and ratification ballots will be provided to you all within a matter of days in order for you all to vote on your next CBA. Please cast your ballot.

2. DLR charge – This 1st step was heard this morning, with the state claiming they don’t have the authority to rescind the order and negotiate. We will continue to the investigative phase due to this stall tactic from the State, which calls for additional dates. This step was necessary procedurally, although the DLR charge will not be finalized prior to the October 17th deadline.

3. Vaccine Mandate Federal Lawsuit – The lawsuit filed in Federal Court will be heard on October 14th, 2021. If there is to be any success against the mandate, it will be in this forum.

4. Religious Exemptions changes – We are disappointed to learn of changes made to the process for Religious Exemptions mid-stream. We are aware of the reconstructed panel format. We have not been included in any of the processes regarding any of these decisions, which is what led us to all of our legal challenges in the first place. More legal challenges will be following on Religious Exemptions with anticipated negative outcomes arising from such drastic changes.

5. Retirees contacted about a return to work – The Executive Board is aware of this. A demand to bargain charge was filed in order to bargain any actions by the State to supplement existing staffing issues, (although they are creating them entirely on their own). We encourage all principles to engage the union on this demand.

6. Letter to State Representatives and Senators – Accompanying this update are copies of letters sent out by MCOFU Legislative Representative Kevin Flanagan to every Legislator in the Commonwealth to serve as an explanation of just how dire our staffing levels will become in very short order, and to ask their help with the vaccine mandate as a result.

On Behalf of the Executive Board,

Corey Scafidi, Executive Secretary, MCOFU
October 6, 2021

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the 3300 members of the Massachusetts Correction Officers Federated Union, we are writing to ask your assistance and support in rescinding the Governors Executive Order 595, mandating vaccination for state employees under the Executive Branch.

This union has consistently encouraged and educated its membership about the Public Health benefits of vaccination. However, we are adamantly and diametrically opposed to any government “mandating” this vaccine. This (much like a woman’s right to choose) is an individual choice that must be respected. Government SHOULD NOT and MUST NOT be allowed to mandate and force employees against their will and free choice.

Furthermore, the Governor’s plan to terminate any and all employees for failure to vaccinate is both draconian and shameful. Our membership has been on the frontline of this deadly pandemic and have confronted the most hideous and dangerous aspects of this pandemic, including loss of life. The fact this mandate does not include inmates, vendors or non-essential employees is futile in curbing the spread of this virus.

According to DOC statistics, only 47% of Correction Officers in the DOC are vaccinated. Termination of 53% of our workforce would result in an unprecedented and epic public safety crisis that would put institutions, employees, and inmates in direct and eminent harm.

Contingency plans of the Governors mass termination would result in the National Guard, which currently does not have a vaccine mandate, to fill the void in our correctional facilities. The Governor will take highly trained and skilled correction officers out of our prisons and replace them with our military.

Our membership, along with many other state employees, are simply asking for a choice. A choice between mandatory testing and voluntary vaccination. Our membership has successfully navigated this unprecedented public health threat without any mandatory vaccination policy to date. We are simply asking to be able to continue our jobs without threat of financial and job loss.

If you would like to discuss this issue further, please do not hesitate to contact us. In the meantime, we respectfully ask you to reach out to the Governor and urge him to rescind his plan of “mass termination for Massachusetts”.

On Behalf of the MCOFU Executive Board,

Derek O’Connor, President

Kevin Flanagan, Legislative Representative

Corey Scafidi, Executive Secretary

Richard Medeiros, Vice President

William Gleason, Treasurer

Eric Cambra, Business Agent

James R. Wilder, Grievance Coordinator
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