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PBA of New York State Calls on Division of Budget and SUNY Chancellor to Include NYS University Police Among Essential Frontline Workers Entitled to COVID Bonuses

University Police Exposed to COVID While Protecting State University Hospitals, Staffing Testing and Vaccine Sites, and Interacting with the Public During Pandemic that Claimed the Lives of 70,000 New Yorkers

Albany, NY (August 11, 2022) – With New York State providing pandemic hazard duty bonuses to an increasing number of “frontline medical personnel” at the State University of New York’s teaching hospitals, the PBA of New York State (PBANYS) is urging the Division of Budget and Interim SUNY Chancellor Deborah Stanley to include New York State University Police Officers among the titles eligible to receive this compensation. As the list of eligible titles continues to expand significantly to include non-medical personnel such as patient-facing food service staff, housekeeping aids, maintenance workers, and medical secretaries and administrative support, the PBANYS believes it is only fitting that the women and men of the State University Police who protect New York’s teaching hospitals and staff be included as qualifying personnel.

Throughout the pandemic New York State University Police Officers worked extra shifts, were away from their families for extended periods, and faced the risk of contracting COVID and spreading it to their families in the very same way that doctors and nurses treating COVID patients did. In fact, police officers were often the first responders who made initial contact with patients and did so without the benefit of the medical grade PPE that hospital staff had access to. This did not deter them from carrying out their duties despite more than half of New York State’s University Police Officers contracting COVID compared to 30% of the general public since the pandemic began.

PBA of New York State President, and University Police Lieutenant’s Director, James McCartney, said, “It is bewildering that the women and men of the New York State University Police are not included amongst the essential frontline workers who will receive pandemic hazard duty bonuses. Our officers were in the field interacting with COVID-positive individuals and we worked shoulder to shoulder with the nurses and doctors at testing and vaccine clinics. Some of our officers even came under gunfire while protecting Upstate Medical Center, ensuring that the public could safely access the highest quality care in their time of need. The PBA respectfully urges Chancellor Stanley and the Division of Budget to classify State University Police Officers as eligible to receive COVID hazard bonus pay, they have more than earned it.”

Providing New York State University Police Officers with pandemic hazard duty bonuses is the appropriate and equitable recognition of the sacrifices that officers and their families made, and make, daily in service to the people of New York state.

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ABOUT the PBA of New York State: Established in 2011, the Police Benevolent Association of New York State (PBA of New York State), is a law enforcement labor union representing the interests of approximately 1,100 members of the New York State Agency Police Services Unit (APSU). The PBA of New York State is the exclusive bargaining agent for the New York State University (SUNY) Police, the New York State Environmental Conservation Police, the New York State Park Police, and the New York State Forest Rangers. Our members police and protect New York State’s public universities and colleges; state parks and historic sites; and they enforce state laws and protect our lands and forests and ensure environmental safety and quality throughout the state.

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