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September 10, 2020

Ms. Jennifer Raab  
President, Hunter College  
695 Park Ave  
New York, NY 10065

Dear President Raab:

I appreciate that you have held conversations with the Hunter College Campus Schools teachers and PSC representatives about reopening the Hunter College Campus Schools, but unfortunately, those conversations have not produced significant movement on the crucial issue of safety. The HCCS administration has failed to establish that the facilities scheduled to be used, starting next week, meet the College's legal obligation to provide a workplace free from recognized hazards, including the hazard of contracting COVID-19. Therefore I call on you not to require any PSC-represented employees to report to work on site at the Hunter College Campus Schools until every room in which employees are scheduled to work is demonstrated to be safe.

Communications from HCCS Director Lisa Siegmann indicate that Hunter College refuses to implement the protocols and protections agreed to *for all other public school students and teachers in New York City*. It is an affront to every student, family and teacher of HCCS that the basic safety standards accepted for every NYC public school under the Department of Education and with employees represented by a union have not been implemented at HCCS. A school that rightly sees itself as a national leader in public education should be the *first* to establish transparency and protections—not the outlier among NYC public schools in failing to adopt minimum protections. Why are the safety standards required for every other public school student and employee in the city not needed at HCCS?

The measures the HCCS administration has taken in an attempt to show that the worksite is safe are inadequate. The report by Genesys Engineering, P.C., dated September 4, is not only deeply flawed in itself, but also written by representatives of the company that did the repairs. It can hardly be considered an independent report.

Offers to tour the buildings are fine, but superficial tours are also inadequate to establish proper ventilation and safety during the COVID emergency. What is required is full access for a genuinely independent inspector and immediate compliance with the DOE protocols.

Because your administration has continued to refuse the union's proposal to share the cost of an inspection conducted by a mutually agreed-upon inspector, the PSC is contracting with an air quality inspection firm we can trust to carry out an immediate inspection. We are working with Airpath Engineering, P.C., and Airpath Testing Services, Inc. to conduct a room-by-room inspection of all rooms to be in use by Hunter College Campus Schools faculty, staff, and students, whether at the 94th Street building or in the Silberman School of Social Work. Airpath has just completed a full assessment of the ventilation system at Columbia University's K-8 school.

In order to conduct the inspection, Airpath will need, at a minimum: an inventory of all rooms and spaces; both new and old mechanical plans and architectural plans; access to the building engineers; and full access to all spaces. They will conduct their assessment and certify whether each room conforms to the current ASHRAE guidelines that have been updated for COVID-19. If any rooms are found to be in non-compliance, Airpath will provide recommendations for adjustments. The PSC will make their report public and disseminate it to all HCCS teachers and parents as soon as we receive it.

Please identify dates within one week of today on which Airpath will be permitted to conduct their analysis. Airpath needs 24-hours' advance notice of the date on which they will have access and may need several days to complete the inspection. The PSC is prepared to take all legal action necessary to gain access to the building for Airpath.

The 94th Street HCCS building has a history of inadequate ventilation; extra care should have been taken before asking employees and students to return. Instead, we have experienced last-minute completion of repairs and a safety report by the very contractor that did the repair work. Teachers, elected officials, students' families and PSC members throughout CUNY are shocked that the school that presents itself as one of the most innovative and rigorous in the city has failed to show that it is meeting its most basic responsibility: to provide a workplace free of hazards.

The HCCS teachers want nothing more than to be safely back in the classroom with their students. They understand deeply the value of in-person instruction, a value that is emotional and social as well as academic. Many are parents themselves, and they know how important it is to parents to be able to send their children back to school. But none of these needs, no matter how compelling, is as compelling as the need to avoid putting lives at risk. No employees should be called back to work at any HCCS worksite until a credible, independent report attests that the buildings are safe and until all DOE protocols for reopening are adhered to.

We look forward to your prompt response and are prepared to take all action necessary to protect our members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Bowen".

Barbara Bowen  
President, PSC

cc: Cristina Moore, PSC Chapter Chair, HCCS  
Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Chancellor  
Lisa Siegmann, Director, Hunter College Campus Schools  
Mark Levine, Chair of the City Council Committee on Health  
Inez Barron, Chair of the City Council Committee on Higher Education  
Mark Treyger, Chair of the City Council Committee on Education  
Carolyn Maloney, U.S. Congress Representative  
Peter Zwiebach, PSC Legal Director