

Contracting out HHC's laundry just doesn't wash

Dirty Deal for New York

The New York City Health and Hospitals Corp. wants to close its Brooklyn Central Laundry and give the work to two private companies. The deal would eliminate 180 decently paid DC 37 positions, mainly in Brooklyn, shrink the city's tax base, and ship jobs and profits out of the city to a firm with a history of treating patients poorly, violating safety and health laws and cheating public institutions. It's a dirty deal that HHC should reject.

PATIENTS WILL SUFFER. One vendor, Sodexo, already has contracts with HHC, where it generates problems with patients and staff. HHC patients have thrown out meals prepared under Sodexo supervision and other Sodexo food facilities have been cited for sanitary violations, including live roaches and rodents.

PUBLIC HOSPITALS WILL SUFFER. Sodexo has a history of overcharging schools, colleges and medical facilities, As Attorney General, Gov. Andrew Cuomo made Sodexo pay a record \$20 million False Claims Act settlement for overbilling 20 school districts, and the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture is investigating Sodexo for possible overcharging of additional districts. Earlier this year the U.S. Marine Corps canceled a \$774 million contract with Sodexo, which promised to save \$20 million but instead ballooned costs by \$329 million.

BROOKLYN COMMUNITIES WILL SUFFER. Wiping out solid middle-class jobs will harm the economy of Brooklyn. Over 90% of the current workers at the laundry live in Brooklyn. On their average pay of \$16/hour, they provide a decent life for their families, pay taxes and spend most of their income in the local economy.

NEW YORK CITY'S ECONOMY WILL SUFFER. The other vendor, Unitex, pays only \$8-\$10 an hour and would move the jobs to Mt. Vernon, where the firm will not pay any NYC taxes. At these wages, many of the workers' families would be eligible for Food Stamps, Medicaid and other benefits, shifting the employers' costs to taxpayers.

WORKING PEOPLE WILL SUFFER. HHC food service workers have had to file sex and race discrimination charges against Sodexo. The firm's treatment of its employees has caused strikes at educational and health care facilities, and Sodexo has been found guilty of violating labor and safety laws.

THIS CONTRACT IS CLEARLY NOT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF HHC PATIENTS OR NEW YORK CITY. HHC claims contracting out the laundry will save \$70 million, but DC 37's research shows that HHC needs lessons in mathematics.

THERE IS A BETTER WAY. When the Giuliani administration tried to contract out HHC's laundry, the City Council provided \$1 million to upgrade the facility and save community jobs. This year, 41 members of the Council have signed a letter opposing the new contracting out scheme.

Today, with a modest investment in new green laundry equipment, HHC could improve fuel-efficiency, save water, energy and money, handle much more laundry with the same workforce, and keep good jobs in the community.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE. Call Mayor Michael Bloomberg, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and your City Council member at 212-788-7100. Call HHC President Alan Aviles at 212-788-3321. Urge them to stop the contracting-out plan.