



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Ashwin Vasan, MD, PhD
Commissioner

August 11, 2023

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Ethan Carrier, Esq.
General Counsel
New York City Conflicts of Interest Board
2 Lafayette Street, Suite 1010
New York, NY 10007

Re: Consulting Back Arrangement with Caleb Ayers, M.D.

Dear Mr. Carrier:

Pursuant to Conflicts of Interest Board Rule 1-07(d)(1), I write to disclose that I approve of Dr. Caleb Ayers, former employee of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene ("DOHMH"), consulting back for DOHMH.

Dr. Ayers joined DOHMH in November 2022 as a City Research Scientist II for the Bureau of World Trade Center Health Registry ("WTCHR") in the Division of Epidemiology. Dr. Ayers resigned on July 11, 2023. He resigned from this position because he received a new opportunity as a Medical Fellow with Havas Health and You. His annual salary was approximately \$93,730.

In his role at DOHMH, Dr. Ayers' responsibilities included continuing design of data collection forms, collecting data, analyzing, and presenting and publishing studies. In particular, he led a project titled "World Trade Center Health Registry: A Case Study for Longitudinal Data" ("Project"). The Project explores equitable collection and analysis of data on gender and sexuality at the WTCHR.

In 2003, when the WTCHR first began collecting data, societal views on gender in the United States were largely binary. However, in recent years, this view has shifted alongside research supporting gender as a nonbinary, fluid social construct. As such, data collection for gender twenty years ago most likely reflected the prevailing, binary views. Preliminary analysis of internal registry documentation supports this claim.

The epidemiologic need for baseline demographic data, increasing literature on gender and its fluidity, differences in survey questions on gender over time, multiple data sources, error correction, and participant reactions all contribute to the complexity of gender data in research. The Project aims to understand the data collection and cleaning methods at the WTCHR in the context of established clinical and research best practices.

Dr. Ayers aims to ensure scientifically rigorous, representative, and inclusive studies of sex/gender minorities.

The project was accepted to the American Public Health Association 2023 Annual Conference. Thus, it is crucial that the project carries out into fruition. The data collection, analysis, report, presentation, and publication of the project remains. Through the consultation of Dr. Ayers, the project may continue to progress and improve, benefitting DOHMH and the City.

Dr. Ayers' services are urgently needed as the work on this project would cease to continue without him. His commitment as the sole lead on gender equity for the project places him in a unique position to carry out the goals and purposes of the project, which are imperative to the goals and purposes of DOHMH and the City.

At Havas Health and You, Dr. Ayers will evaluate literature to synthesize into various educational content (e.g., on disease, pathophysiology, and pharmacology) for clinicians, patients, and internal pharmaceutical teams.

Dr. Ayers anticipates the communication with DOHMH will be on a biweekly basis for meetings and ad hoc for email communications. The nature of his communications with the City would revolve around the project's gender equity work, sharing expertise for continued study design and future data collection, analysis, and presentation and publication. The communications would consist of garnering consensus among the research team through qualitative data collection and coding.

Both DOHMH and the City are committed to equity for all, which includes all people on the spectrum of gender and sexuality. Therefore, the project fits within the priorities of the City and Agency and is thus essential to continue with the consultation of Dr. Ayers.

The WTCHR anticipates that the Project will be completed June 30, 2024.

I support this consulting back arrangement as described above and the proposed compensation of \$75.00 per hour, with former employee Caleb Ayers to work for the WTCHR, and believe that the consulting arrangement will benefit the City.

August 11, 2023

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. If you have any questions please contact Karrie Ann Sheridan, Deputy Director of the Employment Law Unit at (347) 396-6015.

Sincerely,



Ashwin Vasani, MD, MPH
Commissioner

cc: Lisa Landau, General Counsel
Karrie Ann Sheridan, Deputy Director ELU

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