



Agudath
Israel
of America
אגודת ישראל באמריקה

September 11, 2012

Thomas Farley, MD, MPH
Commissioner
NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
Gotham Center
42-09 28th Street, 8th Floor
Queens, NY 11101-4132

Dear Commissioner Farley:

We hasten to reply to your letter of yesterday.

The first words of your letter state that you are writing in response to the letter we wrote to Mayor Bloomberg on September 4, 2012, regarding the proposed new regulation requiring written consent for *metzitzah b'peh*. Respectfully, while your letter states your position, and presumably the Mayor's, as to why you support the proposed amendment, in fact your letter is not at all responsive to ours.

It does not even acknowledge, let alone address, the main point of our September 4 letter: our concern about the unilateral fashion in which the Health Department has proceeded in this matter, without attempting in any way to engage the community in meaningful dialogue regarding this highly sensitive issue – an approach which, as we pointed out, is likely to dramatically undermine the City's stated goal of safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our community's children. Similarly, there is not a word in your letter about our request to meet directly with the Mayor to discuss this issue, and to adjourn the Board of Health's vote on the proposed regulation from September 13 until such time as we have had an opportunity to engage you in serious substantive dialogue on the issues at hand. We find this puzzling, to put it mildly.

So we respectfully reiterate our request. We believe a meaningful dialogue, entered into with mutual respect and goodwill, can yield a positive outcome, as was demonstrated when the rabbinic leadership of our community entered into an agreement in 2006 with the New York State Health Department on this very issue. We see no possible downside to engaging in such dialogue. The worst that can happen is that we will not reach consensus, at which point the proposed regulation can be placed back on the formal agenda of the Board of Health. Why would the City not want to engage us in this process?

THE RABBI MOSHE SHERER NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

42 Broadway • New York, NY 10004 • 212-797-9000 • Fax: 646-254-1600

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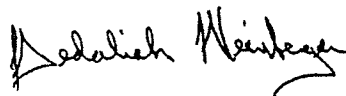
We are at the eleventh hour, but there is still time to handle this sensitive matter the right way. We implore you, as well as the Mayor and the members of the Board of Health (with whom we are sharing copies of our correspondence), to please rethink the dangerous course this appears to be taking, and work together with us as we have requested. The victors will be our children.

Many thanks for your kind consideration. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Rabbi David Zwiebel
Executive Vice President



Rabbi Gedaliah Weinberger
Chairman of the Board

DZ/GW/aa

cc: Honorable Michael R. Bloomberg
Members of the New York City Board of Health