



September 30, 2025

Robert A. Harrington, M.D.
Dean, Weill Cornell Medicine
1300 York Avenue
New York, NY 10065

Dear Dean Harrington:

Postdocs at Weill Cornell voted overwhelmingly to form a union almost two years ago to make urgent improvements to our working conditions. Yet the Weill Cornell administration has refused to reach a fair agreement, instead undermining the progress we've made so far by insisting on the ability to unilaterally change our contract and falling further behind peer institutions.

We know that scientific research is under attack. That is why so many of us have participated actively in fighting cuts to federal research funding [alongside thousands](#) of other UAW academic workers. Postdocs at WCM have [organized](#) and [spoken at rallies](#), held phonebanks, shared stories on [social media](#), met with elected representatives, and participated in [legal action](#). We have been heartened to see signs of progress in response, including [Congressional representatives rejecting proposed cuts](#) to the NIH, the [reinstatement](#) of grants, and [opposition](#) to federal efforts to pressure universities.

We would prefer to work together with WCM to respond to these attacks, instead of spending time and energy fighting each other over whether we deserve a fair contract. But after having made progress on most issues, WCM has taken advantage of attacks on higher education to push for an unnecessary "Force Majeure" clause, explicitly stating that this would be used to pay us less for the same work in the event of changes to funding. Although we have made progress towards a strong salary agreement, this would be meaningless if WCM can reduce our salaries at any time. To address WCM's financial concerns, our elected Bargaining Committee has proposed a fair process for layoffs when necessary. While neither side wants layoffs, we would rather Weill Cornell engage in a fair and respectful layoff process than reduce the value of our work and our standard of living.

Postdocs have historically been undervalued, but years of advocacy by researchers have led to increased recognition of our labor's worth. Agreeing to Force Majeure would undermine the important progress made so far. It is particularly disappointing that WCM, which already lags behind our peer institutions, has insisted on an approach that would make the institution less attractive to talented postdocs — at a time when it is [increasingly difficult to retain international researchers](#), the majority of our workforce. No other postdoc unit in the country has a Force Majeure clause in its contract. We are also keenly aware of how salary reductions would be untenable for most postdocs, especially parents and other underrepresented groups, forcing these people out of academia.

In April, we voted by 92% to authorize a strike if necessary to make clear how strongly we felt on this and other issues. It has been more than five months. Now we are prepared to call on our Bargaining Committee to set a strike deadline if you continue to insist on the ability to change our contract unilaterally. **We therefore urge the WCM administration to agree to a fair contract that includes a timely and respectful process for layoffs in cases of insufficient funding, instead of Force Majeure.**