

Massachusetts Correction Officers Threatening Legal Action Over Vax Mandate

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The union representing prison guards and other corrections officials in Massachusetts said Thursday it was pursuing “all legal and legislative” remedies to thwart Gov. Charlie Baker’s newly imposed mandate that all executive branch employees be vaccinated by mid-October.

Baker announced the new vaccination policy Thursday, making his administration’s position on vaccines for public employees one of the strictest in the country. The Republican signed an executive order stating that all employees who are not vaccinated or approved for an exemption by Oct. 17 “will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.”

The administration said it planned to work with unions on the policy and the “specific ramifications of non-compliance” for staff who are represented by unions. Some bargaining units embraced the move, but the Massachusetts Correction Officers Federated Union said it was “deeply disappointed” by the order, and felt Baker had gone back on his word to allow employees to make their own decision about whether to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

“We feel this Executive Order fails to uphold your individual rights and is unconstitutional,” the MCOFU executive board wrote in a memo to members Thursday. The board said it has “begun the process of pursuing all legal and legislative remedies at our disposal, up to and including an injunction in court.”

“While we know there is anger and outrage, and we share it, we DO have time to continue meeting this mandate with opposition before it takes effect on October 17th, 2021,” the memo stated.

“This fight is not over. It is just the beginning. We urge the Governor to reconsider this mandate, and at WORST, to continue with a plan that allows for voluntary vaccination or regular testing.”