EXHIBIT 2

ı	
1	UNITED SATES DISTRICT COURT
2	EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK
3	x
4	LORRAINE MASCIARELLI,
5	Plaintiff,
6	-against- INDEX NO. 22-cv-7553
7	NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,
8	Defendant.
9	x
10	- A
11	April 4, 2025
12	10:05 a.m.
13	
14	
15	VIRTUAL DEPOSITION of ERIC J. EICHENHOLTZ, on
16	behalf of the Defendant herein, pursuant to Notice,
17	taken before Ceita Lazar, a Stenographic Reporter
18	and Notary Public within and for the State of
19	New York.
20	
21	
22	
23	SANDY SAUNDERS REPORTING
24	254 South Main Street, Suite 216 New City, New York 10956
25	(845) 634-7561

1	APPEARANCES:
2	
3	THE SCHER LAW FIRM, LLP Attorneys for Plaintiff 600 Old Country Road
4	Garden City, New York 11530 BY: AUSTIN GRAFF, ESQ.
5	NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT
6	Attorneys for Defendant 100 Church Street, New York
7	New York 10007 BY: KATHLEEN LINNANE, ESQ.
8	- and - ANDREA MARTIN, ESQ.
9	ANDREA MARIIN, ESQ.
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	
16	
17	ALGO DEGENE
18	ALSO PRESENT:
19	LORRAINE MASCIARELLI
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	

FEDERAL STIPULATIONS

IT IS HEREBY STIPULATED AND AGREED by and between the attorneys for the respective parties herein, that filing and sealing be and the same are hereby waived.

IT IS FURTHER STIPULATED AND AGREED that all objections, except as to the form of the question, shall be reserved to the time of the trial.

IT IS FURTHER STIPULATED AND AGREED that the within deposition may be signed and sworn to before any officer authorized to administer an oath, with the same force and effect as if signed and sworn to before the Court.

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2	THE REPORTER: Usual stips?
3	MS. LINNANE: I would like
4	the stips read in, please.
5	THE REPORTER: IT IS HEREBY
6	STIPULATED AND AGREED by and
7	between the attorneys for the
8	respective parties herein, that
9	filing and sealing be and the
10	same are hereby waived.
11	
12	IT IS FURTHER STIPULATED AND
13	AGREED that all objections,
14	except as to the form of the
15	question, shall be reserved to
16	the time of the trial.
17	
18	IT IS FURTHER STIPULATED AND
19	AGREED that the within deposition
20	may be signed and sworn to before
21	any officer authorized to
22	administer an oath, with the same
23	force and effect as if signed and
24	sworn to before the Court.
25	MS. LINNANE: Agreed.

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2	MR. GRAFF: I'm fine with
3	them too.
4	THE REPORTER: Pursuant to
5	Order, Notice, or something else?
6	MR. GRAFF: Notice.
7	THE REPORTER: Ms. Linnane,
8	would you like to purchase a
9	copy?
10	MR. GRAFF: I'll provide.
11	MS. LINNANE: Thank you,
12	Mr. Graff.
13	THE REPORTER: My name is
14	Ceita Lazar, court reporter. The
15	parties are present remotely to
16	take the deposition of Eric J.
17	Eichenholtz In the Matter of
18	Lorraine Masciarelli versus New
19	York City Department of
20	Education.
21	I ask that everyone please
22	stay close to the microphone so
23	that I can provide the best
24	transcript possible and also so
25	my interruptions will be minimal.

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 Will counsel please state their name, who they represent, 3 and then I will swear in the 4 5 witness. MR. GRAFF: Austin Graff 6 from The Scher Law Firm 7 representing the plaintiff, 8 Lorraine Masciarelli. 9 MS. LINNANE: Kathleen 10 11 Linnane, Corporation Counsel for 12 the defendants. 13 MS. MARTIN: Andrea Martin, 14 Corporation Counsel for defendant. 15 16 17 ERIC J. EICHENHOLTZ, 18 Having been first duly sworn by the Notary Public (CEITA LAZAR), and stating 19 his address as 100 Church Street, New 20 York, New York 10007, was examined and 21 testified as follows: 22 23 24 EXAMINATION 25 BY MR. GRAFF:

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		Li L (-)	IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII	エンエ	$\perp \perp \perp$

- Q. Good morning, Mr. Eichenholtz.
- 3 My name is Austin Graff. I am the
- 4 attorney for the plaintiff, Lorraine
- 5 | Masciarelli, in this action. I'm going
- 6 to ask you a series of questions today.
- 7 | Please make your responses verbal.
- 8 | Hand gestures and head nods cannot be
- 9 taken down by the court reporter. Do
- 10 you understand that?
- 11 A. Yes.
- 12 Q. If you need to take a break at
- any point, please let me know. As long
- 14 | as there's no pending question, we can
- 15 take a break. Do you understand that?
- 16 A. Yes.
- 17 Q. If you answer a question, I'll
- 18 | assume that you understood what I'm
- 19 asking. But if you don't understand
- 20 the question, please stop me and either
- 21 | ask me to repeat it, rephrase it, or
- 22 | we'll have the court reporter read it
- 23 | back to you. Do you understand that?
- 24 A. Yes.
- 25 Q. Do you have anything in front of

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ	
2	you regarding this case, any paperwork,	
3	any documents, anything related to this	
4	case in front of you?	
5	A. No.	
6	Q. And where are you currently	
7	located?	
8	A. I'm located at the New York City	
9	Law Department, 100 Church Street, New	
10	York, New York.	
11	Q. Is there anyone in the room with	
12	you right now?	
13	A. Yes. Kathleen Linnane, who is	
14	counsel for the defendant in this case.	
15	Q. How did you prepare for today's	
16	deposition?	
17	A. I reviewed Ms. Masciarelli's	
18	appeal of her the Department of	
19	Education's denial of her religious	
20	reasonable accommodation request. I	
21	reviewed the complaint and some other	
22	litigation papers in this action. And	
23	I also reviewed some portions of the	
24	EEOC guidance that was in place in 2021	
25	and 2022 regarding COVID-19 and the EEO	

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2	laws. I also reviewed I should also
3	say I also reviewed provisions of the
4	New York State sorry, New York City
5	Human Rights Law located at
6	Administrative Code 8107.
7	Q. And you're appearing today
8	pursuant to a notice of deposition?
9	A. Correct.
10	Q. I'm just going to tell me
11	when you see it on the screen.
12	A. I don't.
13	MS. LINNANE: Yeah, we just
14	see black here.
15	THE WITNESS: Oh, there it
16	is.
17	MS. LINNANE: I'm going to
18	make this bigger, Austin. Just
19	give me one second here.
20	MR. GRAFF: I can make it
21	larger on my side too. Just let
22	me know.
23	MS. LINNANE: Is that big
24	enough? That's fine.
25	MR. GRAFF: I'll mark this

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
          as Exhibit A.
 3
                (Plaintiff's Exhibit A,
 4
 5
                Notice of Deposition, was
          marked for identification.)
 6
 7
     BY MR. GRAFF:
 8
          Q. Is this the notice of deposition
 9
10
      that you're appearing pursuant to here
      today?
11
12
          A. Yes, that is my understanding by
      counsel.
13
          Q. And there were a list of
14
15
      subjects of testimony. You're prepared
      to answer some or all of the topics?
16
17
          A. Some, not all. And I would be
18
      happy to, you know, if we reach a point
      where one of the topics is not within
19
20
      the scope of my knowledge, well, I'm
      sure we'll be -- I will point it out.
21
22
      I'm sure my counsel will, you know,
23
      advise us to anything that the
      defendant believes is not appropriate
24
      to discuss.
25
```

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2	Q. Okay. Are you currently
3	employed?
4	A. Yes.
5	Q. Who is your employer?
6	A. The City of New York.
7	Q. How long have you worked for the
8	City of New York?
9	A. Since September of 2002.
10	Q. Is there a particular agency or
11	department within the City of New York
12	that you're employed by?
13	A. Yes, the New York City Law
14	Department.
15	Q. And have you been working for
16	the city law department since
17	September, 2002?
18	A. Yes.
19	Q. What is your current title?
20	A. Managing attorney.
21	Q. Did you say "managing attorney"?
22	A. Yes.
23	Q. And as managing attorney, what
24	are your duties and responsibilities?
25	A. I oversee, at an executive
	1

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      level, the labor and employment law
      division, which is the division of the
 3
 4
      law department that handles all labor
 5
      and employment related legal issues,
 6
      litigation.
 7
             I advise, at a high level,
      unemployment law issues.
 8
      internally, I oversee, at an executive
 9
10
      level, all of the law department's
11
      internal operations and operational
12
      divisions, which include
      administration, litigation support,
13
      operations, information technology, as
14
15
      well as things like budget, fiscal,
      personnel, human resources benefits,
16
17
      things like that.
          O. That's it?
18
19
          A. Just that, yes.
20
          Q. And how long have you been in
21
      the title of managing attorney?
22
          A. Since -- I started in an acting
23
      capacity in late November of 2022.
      was formally appointed in December of
24
25
      2022, and I've been serving in that
```

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2	capacity since.
3	Q. Before you were managing
4	attorney, what was your job title?
5	A. I was chief assistant
6	corporation counsel for employment,
7	policy, and litigation.
8	Q. And when were you appointed to
9	that position?
10	A. October, 2021.
11	Q. And before you were chief
12	assistant corporation counsel, what was
13	your job title?
14	A. Division chief of the labor and
15	employment law division.
16	Q. And when were you appointed to
17	that position?
18	A. February of 2013.
19	Q. As chief assistant corporation
20	counsel appointed in October of 2021,
21	what were your job duties?
22	A. So I was much like I am now,
23	providing legal advice, see counsel on
24	employment law matters to the city
25	agencies and elected officials. I

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2	oversaw oversaw, like I do now, the
3	labor and employment law division in an
4	executive capacity. At the time, in
5	addition, I also oversaw affirmative
6	litigation, e-discovery, and Workers'
7	Compensation.
8	Q. What is the difference between
9	your position as managing attorney and
10	chief assistant corporation counsel?
11	MS. LINNANE: I'm just going
12	to caution the witness not to
13	disclose anything that could be
14	considered privileged pursuant to
15	the doctrine of attorney-client
16	privilege.
17	THE WITNESS: Of course.
18	A. The difference is, essentially,
19	the scope of my responsibilities.
20	Managing attorney is considered higher
21	level position because it has
22	office-wide responsibility. I'm
23	essentially considered third in line
24	corporation counsel and the first
25	assistant corporation counselor ahead

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1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      of me.
             And, obviously, is you saw from
 3
      the division allotment, my portfolio is
 4
 5
      slightly different. I still have the
 6
      same employment law portfolio, but
 7
      instead of overseeing other divisions
      and subject areas, my focus is more on
 8
      the overall management and operations
 9
10
      of the New York City Law Department
      itself.
11
12
          Q. Is the position from chief
      assistant corporation counsel to
13
14
      managing attorney a promotion?
15
          A. Yes.
          Q. Are you a licensed attorney in
16
17
      New York?
          A. I am.
18
          Q. When were you admitted to
19
20
      practice?
21
          A. January 2003.
          Q. Do you have any training in
22
23
      Title 7 issues regarding religious
      discrimination?
24
25
          A. Yes.
```

E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

- Q. What type of training do you
- 3 have?

- 4 A. Many types of training. So I
- 5 have, obviously, over a roughly 22-
- 6 | plus year career. I have taken dozens
- 7 | of CLE courses on this and other
- 8 | employment related law topics.
- 9 The City of New York requires
- 10 | employees to be trained regularly on
- 11 | the antidiscrimination laws, including
- 12 | Title 7 trained on reasonable
- 13 | accommodations. I have, in addition to
- 14 being trained myself, I have presented
- 15 | CLEs both internally within the law
- 16 department, as well as at the
- 17 | Practicing Law Institute on issues
- 18 regarding Title 7, issues regarding
- 19 reasonable accommodations, issues
- 20 regarding retaliation, EDA, and all the
- 21 | state and local law as well. Because,
- 22 as you know, in New York City, we have
- 23 | a City Human Rights Law which is -- has
- 24 a broader reach, generally, than the
- 25 | federal counterparts. So we focus on

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2	those laws as well when we do training
3	and when I am being trained, as well as
4	when I'm presenting training.
5	Q. When you discussed how you
6	prepared today, you reviewed New York
7	City Human Rights Law Section 8-107?
8	A. Uh-hum.
9	Q. Why did you review that specific
10	section?
11	A. I wanted to make sure, because I
12	understood this case to be involving a
13	decision on an RA, reasonable
14	accommodation. I just wanted to make
15	sure that I had, fresh in my mind, the
16	particular provisions in the City Human
17	Rights Law regarding religious
18	reasonable accommodations. So that's
19	why I did it.
20	Q. How did that law impact the
21	COVID vaccine mandate reasonable
22	accommodation requests?
23	MS. LINNANE: Objection.
24	You can answer.
25	A. Other than it obviously provided

E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

legal parameters for which we would
analyze, grant, or deny requests. In
other words, the positive, the
proscriptive parts of that law, would
compel a grant, and the prescriptive
parts are the parts that allowed
employer discretions to deny a grant,

So it was part of what governed the city's analysis and the city's discretion of whether to grant or deny a reasonable accommodation request.

would be a basis for denying the grant

of a reasonable accommodation.

- Q. When you discussed the city's decision, does that include the New York City Department of Education?
- A. Yes. Yes. I'm being general as to when I say "the city" in that context, I should say. And I will be more precise, because you are right.

 There are times where the city is not necessarily the Department of Education and vice versa.
 - Q. Did the New York City Department

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1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      of Education have to comply with the
      New York Human Rights Law Section 8-107
 3
 4
      when it was making determinations
 5
      regarding religious accommodations for
      the vaccine mandate?
 6
 7
                MS. LINNANE:
                               Objection.
                You can answer.
 8
          A. Yes.
 9
10
     (The Reporter requested clarification.)
11
                               I had lodged
                MS. LINNANE:
12
          an objection.
13
                THE WITNESS: And I said
14
          yes.
15
     BY MR. GRAFF:
16
          Q. Did you have any role to play in
17
      the implementation of the vaccine
18
      mandate in the New York City Department
      of Education?
19
20
                MS. LINNANE:
                               Objection.
21
                You can answer.
22
          A. I was, from time to time,
23
      consulted as that mandate was being
      promulgated and implemented.
24
25
     BY MR.
             GRAFF:
```

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 Q. Did you have a role to play in the first iteration of the vaccine 3 4 mandate issued by the Department of 5 Health? 6 MS. LINNANE: Objection. You can answer. 7 A. Same role. 8 BY MR. GRAFF: 9 10 Q. I'm not trying to impede the attorney-client privilege, but I'm just 11 12 trying to ask, did you have a role to play -- were you consulted with respect 13 14 to the implementation -- with the 15 implementation of the vaccine mandate 16 in its first iteration? 17 A. Yes. 18 O. And that was the iteration where there was no accommodations for 19 20 religious and health issues, correct? 21 MS. LINNANE: Objection. There was no iteration of 22 A. No. 23 the vaccine mandate that did not provide for reasonable accommodation 24 25 for religious or medical issues.

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1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
     BY MR. GRAFF:
          O. The first time the vaccine
 3
 4
      mandate was promulgated, are you saying
 5
      that there was always an accommodation
      for religious and medical issues?
 6
 7
          A. That is correct.
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
 8
     BY MR. GRAFF:
 9
          Q. Was there a second iteration of
10
      the vaccine mandate?
11
12
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
13
                You can answer.
          A. No. There was a revision of the
14
15
      original vaccine mandate --
          O. What was --
16
          A. -- issued as to the DOE
17
      employees. I want to make sure we're
18
      both being clear on what we're talking
19
20
      about.
21
          Q. What was the amendment or
      revision?
22
23
          A. The revision was to add a
      statement that explicitly stated that
24
25
      the accommodations that were required
```

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 by law were -- were allowable, I guess you can say, under the accommodation --3 4 under the religious accommodation 5 policy, which was always the case. 6 That language made it explicit in that 7 physical document. Q. So you're saying it was implicit 8 in the first version, and then it was 9 10 explicit in the second version, correct? 11 12 MS. LINNANE: Objection. You can answer. 13 14 A. I'm not just saying that. That 15 is correct. Q. Okay. Did you have any role to 16 17 play in negotiating with the UFT over 18 the implementation of the vaccine mandate with the New York City 19 20 Department of Education? 21 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 22 I'm going to caution the witness 23 not to disclose any information that would be considered 24 25 privileged pursuant to the

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
          doctrine of attorney-client
          privilege.
 3
 4
          A. Then I won't, but I will say
      that I was consulted from time to time
 5
 6
      as that process, that negotiating and
      arbitration process, was ongoing.
 7
     BY MR. GRAFF:
 8
 9
          Q. Were you at the bargaining table
10
      when the UFT and the Department of
      Education were negotiating the
11
12
      implementation of the vaccine mandate?
13
                THE WITNESS: Objection.
14
          A. I was not at the bargaining
15
      table. I was at a discussion that was
      held between -- very preliminary
16
17
      discussion before bargaining between
18
      the UFT and the New York City Office of
      Labor relations.
19
     BY MR. GRAFF:
20
21
          Q. Do you know when that meeting
22
      was that you attended?
23
          A. As I sit here -- years later,
      no, I could not tell you.
24
25
          Q. Do you know the identities of
```

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      the individuals who represented the
      Department of Education in negotiations
 3
      with the UFT?
 4
 5
                MS. LINNANE:
                              Objection.
 6
          A. I -- well, I know that two
 7
      people who were regularly involved from
      the New York City Office of Labor
 8
      Relations was Steven Banks, and from
 9
10
      the Department of Education -- although
      I don't know her specific role -- but
11
12
      the head of labor relations who was
13
      Karen Solimando.
                        They were both
      involved at a certain level.
14
15
     BY MR. GRAFF:
          Q. Were you involved in formulating
16
17
      the New York City Department of
18
      Education's bargaining position
      relating to the implementation of the
19
      vaccine mandate?
20
21
                MS. LINNANE:
                              Objection.
22
                You can answer.
23
          A. No, I was not.
     BY MR. GRAFF:
24
25
          Q. Okay. I'm going to show you
```

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      what I'm going to mark as Exhibit B.
 3
                (Plaintiff's Exhibit B,
 4
 5
                Declaration of Impasse, was
          marked for identification.)
 6
 7
          Q. Let me know when you see it on
 8
      the screen.
 9
10
          A. I will.
                MS. LINNANE: Are there
11
12
          Bates stamps on these documents,
          Austin?
13
14
                MR. GRAFF: This is actually
          from the docket, and it is Docket
15
          No. 22-2 of the court's docket.
16
17
                MS. LINNANE: For the
18
          record, I would just like to
          record for the record that it
19
20
          says in capital, bold letters at
21
          the top that this page that we're
22
          seeing on the screen, Declaration
23
          of Impasse. I'm stating this
          because all of the stamps from
24
25
          the docket are very mixed up and
```

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 very difficult to see. BY MR. GRAFF: 3 4 Q. Mr. Eichenholtz, have you ever 5 seen this document before? 6 A. Not that I can recall. Q. Are you aware that the UFT 7 declared an impasse in the negotiations 8 over the implementation of the vaccine 9 10 mandate? A. I'm not -- I have no independent 11 12 recollection of that happening. 13 obviously looking at the document 14 you're showing me. That's what it 15 appears to indicate. Q. On page 9 of this document, it 16 17 addresses what the city's position was 18 regarding accommodations. MS. LINNANE: What are 19 20 you -- please direct us to what 21 you're looking at, because you're 22 making a statement about the 23 document without my client having read what's in the document. 24 25 we're going to talk about this

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 document, my client has already stated he does not know what this 3 document is. He's never seen it, 4 and he needs the opportunity to 5 6 review it in its entirety if we're going to talk about it. 7 BY MR. GRAFF: 8 Q. At the first paragraph of one, 9 10 two, three, fourth line of the document, it begins, "Yet, the City has 11 12 refused insisting that there can be no 13 exceptions to the mandate medical, 14 religious, or otherwise." Do you see 15 where I'm reading from? A. I see that. I can tell you that 16 17 statement is inconsistent with my 18 understanding of -- certainly of the mandate that was issued and my 19 20 understanding of the ultimate outcome 21 of this negotiation. And that's the 22 extent of my knowledge. I'm unaware of 23 any time where the City had refused insisting there can be no exceptions to 24

the mandate, medical, religious, or

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ otherwise. 2 Q. Is it possible that the City 3 4 took that position at the bargaining 5 table without your knowledge? 6 MS. LINNANE: Objection. A. Based on -- based on the 7 timeline of this document, I cannot say 8 yes or no. It would be pure speculation 9 10 whether or not that was the case. can just tell you that at no time did I 11 12 understand the City was going to have a mandate that had no exceptions. 13 BY MR. GRAFF: 14 15 Q. What role did you play in determining whether to grant or deny 16 17 teachers religious exemptions from the vaccine mandate? 18 19 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 20 You can answer. 21 A. In the initial process, I played no role. After a decision of the 22 23 United States Court of Appeals of the Second Circuit that found 24 25 constitutional infirmities, statutory

E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

2 infirmities or perhaps both, of the process that had been created by the 3 arbitration award between the UFT and 4 5 the Department of Education, the City 6 agreed to remediate those concerns by giving teachers a chance to have a 7 review of denials by a panel that I had 8 9 had a primary role in setting up, the 10 New York City Citywide Vaccine Mandate Appeals Panel. And just to give you 11 12 context, the Citywide Appeals Panel had been set up prior to that decision, 13 14 prior to that case, for the vaccine 15 mandate that had subsequently after DOE employees that had been promulgated 16 17 with respect to all city employees. 18 And so, ultimately, teachers, as I understand, were given the 19 20 opportunity to be reviewed by the Citywide Appeals Panel. The Second 21 22 Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed that 23 was an appropriate way to remediate. And so, at that point, we received 24 25 something over 500 -- at some point 500

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      plus appeals from various pedagogical
      DOE employees in addition to the work
 3
 4
      we were already doing for city
 5
      employees.
     BY MR. GRAFF:
 6
 7
          Q. Are you aware of what has been
      called a general committee that decided
 8
      to deny every religious exemption
 9
10
      submitted to the New York City
      Department of Education?
11
12
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
13
                You can answer.
14
          A. No.
15
     BY MR. GRAFF:
          Q. Are you aware that there was a
16
17
      decision to deny every religious
18
      exception submitted to the New York
      City Department of Education?
19
20
                MS. LINNANE:
                               Objection.
21
                You can answer.
          A. Absolutely not.
22
23
     BY MR. GRAFF:
          Q. Are you aware that only -- the
24
25
      only people received exemptions were
```

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 through the Scheinman Arbitration Mediation Service appeal process? 3 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 4 You can answer. 5 6 A. I don't know the specific 7 details of how that process worked. Myunderstanding was that there was a 8 9 negotiation that -- that there was --10 essentially, part of that process was that an independent labor arbitrator 11 12 make the decision. But I don't know the particular ins and outs of how that 13 14 process works. I was not involved in 15 it, and I was never working on the specifics of the process that was 16 17 ultimately implemented through that arbitration award. 18 BY MR. GRAFF: 19 20 Q. Are you aware of any group of 21 New York City Department of Education employees who met and determined that 22 23 every religious exemption was going to be denied? 24 25 Objection. MS. LINNANE:

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 You can answer. 3 A. Absolutely not. BY MR. GRAFF: 4 5 Q. Do you know how many New York 6 City Department of Education employees received religious exemptions? 7 A. I know at least some did, 9 because I know from my work on the 10 Citywide Panel that the panel granted several. I don't have the exact 11 12 number, but -- so I know that some did. 13 I also -- at least it was my 14 understanding -- and, again, that there 15 were some that received a religious reasonable accommodations through the 16 17 arbitration award process. So I know 18 there were some. I don't know how 19 I don't know who or what or 20 where or why or anything like that. 21 Q. Do you have any knowledge of any 22 individual employees from the New York 23 City Department of Education who received an exemption from the vaccine 24 mandate without either the arbitration 25

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 appeal or to the appeal panel? 3 MS. LINNANE: Objection. You can answer. 4 A. I would have no way of knowing 5 6 that. 7 BY MR. GRAFF: Q. Were you aware of the fact that 8 the New York City Department of 9 10 Education granted zero religious exemptions to 3,396 people who applied 11 12 for religious exemptions? 13 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 14 You can answer. 15 A. Again, that question doesn't square with my understanding of how the 16 17 process works. My understanding was 18 that those requests pursuant to the 19 arbitration award were going to outside 20 of the Department of Education and to a 21 mutual arbitrator. So when you say 22 "the Department of Education granted," 23 at least that was not my understanding of how it worked. I could be wrong, 24 25 but I just say that because I cannot

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 answer that question because that's not my understanding of how it works. 3 BY MR. GRAFF: 4 5 Q. Is it your understanding that 6 the Department of Education made no 7 initial determination whether to grant or deny an exemption? 8 9 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 10 You can answer. A. My understanding is precisely 11 12 what I said to you, which is I understood that the arbitration award 13 14 that was issued regarding how our 15 requests were to be processed for DOE employees from the DOE mandate --16 17 employee mandate was that they were to 18 be adjudicated by a mutual labor 19 arbitrator and not by what we would say in the labor relations context was 20 21 management. 22 BY MR. GRAFF: 23 Q. And if there was a decision by the New York City Department of 24 25 Education to deny every exemption

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1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      request from DOE employees, would that
      have complied with New York City Human
 3
 4
      Rights Law Section 8-107?
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
 5
 6
          A. I'm not going to speculate on a
 7
      decision that everything I know
      suggests did not happen and did not
 8
      exist.
 9
10
     BY MR. GRAFF:
          Q. Are you aware of the arbitration
11
12
      process for the determination of the
      appeals of the denial of exemptions
13
14
      through the Scheinman Arbitration
      Mediation Service?
15
16
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
17
                You can answer.
18
          A. As I said previously, I'm aware
19
      of the process. I don't know the
20
      details of the process.
     BY MR. GRAFF:
21
22
          Q. Do you know if the New York City
23
      Department of Education was represented
      by an attorney at those arbitration
24
25
      hearings?
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1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
 3
                You can answer.
          A. I do not know.
 4
 5
     BY MR. GRAFF:
 6
          Q. Do you know who Veronica -- I'm
      going to spell her name, because I
 7
      don't know how pronounce it --
 8
      P-R-Z-Y-G-O-C-K-I is?
 9
10
          A. Sure. I do not know who that
      is. And, presumably, that name is
11
12
      unique enough that it would ring a bell
      if I did.
13
14
          Q. Do you know if she's an attorney
15
      in the New York City Law Department?
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
16
17
                You can answer.
18
          A. Not that I'm aware of. But,
      like I said, the fact that I do not
19
20
      know that name suggests likely not.
     BY MR. GRAFF:
21
22
          Q. And you said you were -- well, I
23
      don't want to characterize it.
      was your role with the City of New York
24
      Reasonable Accommodation Panel --
25
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E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

Appeals Panel?

A. So when the city employee vaccine mandate was implemented, there was discussion on how to implement the legal obligations, the internal city policy obligations, because we have a citywide DO policy, a citywide RA policy on reasonable accommodations and whether any adjustments needed to be made due to the unique contours of the public health emergency.

And there were two things that, ultimately, the various policy makers felt were important. One was that there would be uniformity of decision, and the other that there be, you know, careful but expeditious decision So I, as well as some of the making. other colleagues in city government, were tasked with creating a process that would do that. And, ultimately, that's where the Citywide Appeals Panel comes from.

Q. Okay. I'm going to show you the

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1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      next exhibit. Let me know when you see
           I'm going to mark this Exhibit C.
 3
      it.
 4
 5
                (Plaintiff's Exhibit C,
 6
                Appeal to Appeals Panel, was
               marked for identification.)
 7
 8
          A. Okay, I see it.
 9
10
          Q. Do you recognize this document?
      It's Document No. 1-7 on the court's
11
12
      docket.
          A. Could you scroll down so I could
13
      see the whole document?
14
15
          Q. Sure. Let me know if I'm going
      too fast.
16
17
          A. So this appears to be a letter
18
      authored by Ms. Masciarelli's counsel.
      I believe it looks like to the DOE
19
20
      regarding her denial for religious
      reasonable accommodation and addressing
21
      the decision of the labor arbitrator
22
23
      that denied the accommodation.
                               To be clear,
24
                MS. LINNANE:
25
          it's not the counsel that we're
```

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
          talking to right now. It's the
          counsel -- appears to be Giulia
 3
          Miller, M-I-L-E-R.
4
5
    BY MR. GRAFF:
 6
          Q. When you said you reviewed
      documents in preparation for today's
7
      deposition, was this one of the
8
      documents you reviewed?
9
          A. I remember a document that looks
10
      something like this. I can't tell you
11
12
      as I sit here today if it's the precise
      document.
13
14
          Q. What documents did the appeals
15
      panel use to determine whether to grant
      a religious exemption to a New York
16
17
      City Department of employee --
18
      Department of Education employee?
19
          A. Are you asking me generally or
      in Ms. Masciarelli's case?
20
          Q. Let's talk generally, and then
21
      we'll talk about Ms. Masciarelli.
22
23
          A. Okay. Generally, we would
      receive a submission of some sort from
24
25
      the appealing employee. Just remember,
```

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 everything we saw were appeals of denials, so an employee was bringing us 3 an appeal, some sort of submission, 4 5 some material, whatever material they The DOE could 6 wanted to provide us. 7 but did not -- was not required to provide us also with material to 8 9 explain or contextualize their 10 decision. Sometimes the DOE did so. Sometimes the DOE did not do so. 11 12 Q. Do you have any recollection of 13 what was presented to the appeals panel 14 regarding the plaintiff? I remember there was a --15 A. Yes. a position statement submitted. And 16 17 I'm assuming you're talking about the 18 DOE now? I should ask. Are you talking about the DOE or 19 Ms. Masciarelli? 20 Q. Regarding Ms. Masciarelli, what 21 the process was with Ms. Masciarelli's 22 23 appeal to the appeal panel? A. I remember Ms. Masciarelli had a 24 25 submission of some sort and that the

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1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      DOE in Ms. Masciarelli's case submitted
      a position statement as well.
 3
 4
          Q. Do you -- do you know the name
 5
      of the person who ultimately reviewed
 6
      Ms. Masciarelli's appeal to the appeal
 7
      panel?
                MS. LINNANE:
                               Objection.
 8
 9
                You can answer.
10
          A. There wouldn't be one person.
      It would be three. Because the way the
11
12
      appeal panel worked was there were
      three voting agencies.
13
     BY MR. GRAFF:
14
15
          Q. What were the three voting
      agencies with respect to
16
17
      Ms. Masciarelli?
18
                              Objection.
                MS. LINNANE:
19
                You can answer.
20
          A. So I -- specifically with
      respect to religious reasonable
21
22
      accommodations, the three agencies that
23
      had a vote were the law department, the
      Department of Citywide Administrative
24
25
      Services, as well as the City
```

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 Commission on Human Rights. BY MR. GRAFF: 3 4 Q. Were these three agencies --5 were the representatives of these three 6 agencies consistent for all appeals, or 7 did it rotate amongst employees of the different departments? 8 A. Given the workload, each agency 9 10 designated multiple employees to review the appeals of religious reasonable 11 12 accommodations that went to the panel. So it was done on a rotational basis. 13 14 How, specifically, that rotation worked 15 depended on how the panel members in that agency organized themselves 16 17 internally. 18 Q. Is there any way to know who made the decision regarding 19 20 Ms. Masciarelli's appeal? 21 A. Again, the "who" is multiple 22 people. But there is -- with every 23 case, the panel has a vote report that

we can generate from the database that

was managing our work flow, that would

24

25

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 show both the name of the representative, the representative's 3 And that representative also had 4 5 notes for their own internal 6 recollection purposes, as well as it 7 would tell us which member -- there were two members of the panel who did a 8 9 quality assurance review at the end --10 would also tell us who on the panel did that quality assurance review. 11 12 Q. Are there any privileges or any objections to releasing those documents 13 14 through discovery? 15 A. That I'm aware of? I think I don't -- I need to defer to counsel on 16 17 I don't know whether there could 18 be, and I don't want to say no when 19 there is or yes when there isn't. So I 20 would refer you to counsel on that. 21 Q. Do you know how many New York 22 City Department of Education employees 23 received a religious exemption from the

appeals panel?

MS. LINNANE:

Objection.

24

25

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1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
                You can answer.
          A. I do not know that number
 3
      offhand.
 4
 5
     BY MR. GRAFF:
 6
          Q. Were there any?
 7
          A. Yes.
                   I know that.
          Q. Do you know if any of them were
 8
      Catholic?
 9
10
                MS. LINNANE:
                               Objection.
11
                You can answer.
12
          A. I believe so. It's very tough.
      And I'll say this, because I'm sure
13
14
      you're going to be asking me this a
15
      lot, Mr. Graff.
16
             It's very tough to say whether
17
      or not someone was Catholic, because
18
      there were a lot of Catholic employees
      who would identify as Christian or
19
      would not necessarily label their faith
20
      specifically, but would explain to us
21
22
      what their religious belief system was.
23
             So, certainly, there were
      beliefs that were professed by many
24
25
      Catholics that were sincerely held,
```

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 that were held by members of other religions. So I would never conclude 3 4 from the beliefs that I was presented 5 that someone was a Catholic, and I 6 would have no way of knowing, because I 7 did not -- we did not ask. I don't believe the DOE asked. Certainly, we 8 They weren't saying, 9 did not receive. 10 Hey, before you give us your submission, what's your religion? So I 11 12 would have no independent way of saying to you for sure this person is a 13 14 Catholic, this person's not, unless 15 they affirmatively said in their appeal paperwork, I am a Catholic. 16 17 BY MR. GRAFF: 18 Q. Are you aware that the -- we're going to mark this first as Exhibit D. 19 20 (Plaintiff's Exhibit D, 21 Reasonable Accommodation 22 23 Appeal Determination, was marked for identification.) 24 25

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2	Q. Let me know when you see it on
3	the screen.
4	A. I see it on the screen.
5	Q. Are you aware that
6	Ms. Masciarelli's appeal was denied?
7	A. Based from my review of her
8	documents, yes.
9	Q. But you did you participate
10	in the decision to deny Ms. Masciarelli
11	her appeal to the appeal's panel?
12	MS. LINNANE: Objection.
13	You can answer.
14	A. Yeah. I was not a member of her
15	appeal's panel, no.
16	BY MR. GRAFF:
17	Q. As we sit here, do you know who
18	the members of her appeal panel were?
19	MS. LINNANE: Objection.
20	You can answer.
21	A. I don't I did read the names
22	when I reviewed the documents. As I
23	sit here today, I would not have an
24	independent recollection.
25	BY MR. GRAFF:

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 Q. The email that's Docket No. 1-4, was this the standard response to the 3 4 employees who were denied religious 5 exemptions? 6 MS. LINNANE: Objection. You can answer. 7 This was the response that 8 9 was generated by the database that 10 managed the appeal panel's workflow after all review was complete and it 11 12 was put in the database that the appeal 13 was completely reviewed and ready for, 14 you know -- and was finalized and such. 15 BY MR. GRAFF: Q. Do you know how many appeals 16 17 came in from the Department of Education? 18 19 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 20 You can answer. 21 A. My recollection is roughly, and this is an approximation, 550. 22 23 BY MR. GRAFF: Q. Out of the 550, do you know how 24 25 many were granted?

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 3 You can answer. A. No. 4 5 BY MR. GRAFF: 6 O. What was the -- strike that. 7 On what basis were the appeals panel members given whether to grant or 8 deny an exemption? 9 10 MS. LINNANE: Objection. You can answer. 11 12 A. So the way reasonable 13 accommodations work, you're not 14 supposed to say, oh, this is a magic 15 word. Yes or no. You're supposed to -- or magic phrase or a magic statement 16 17 to say. You're supposed to look at 18 what the individual employee is saying their beliefs are. You're supposed to 19 20 determine whether those beliefs have, 21 in this case, when we're dealing with 22 the COVID-19 employee vaccine mandate, 23 you're seeing whether those beliefs have a conflict with that vaccine 24 25 mandate. And if it's raised by the

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E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

2 agency or evident in the record,

whether or not affirmatively speaking, 3

the employer has presented an undue 4

5 burden in granting that accommodation.

And any of those questions or any combination of those questions could be dispositive on any given case.

Similarly, particularly with respect to whether there is a sincerely-held religious belief and whether it conflicts with the vaccine mandate, those were highly dependent on what the employee was saying about their belief system and how they practice their belief system. And so there was no, you know, oh, if this, then this, because you had to look at every person holistically. You had to see what they were saying. You had to understand why they were seeking the accommodation and then for each individual, if there was an undue hardship, issue, or concern at issue that, you know, the agency was raising

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 it as an issue, you had to look at the particular applicant's circumstances, 3 as well as the overall circumstances of 4 5 whether or not providing that accommodation would, you know, present 6 an undue hardship - - - --7 BY MR. GRAFF: 8 9 Q. Is that the same process that 10 the New York City Department of Education should have applied in the 11 12 initial decision to grant or deny an 13 exemption? 14 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 15 You can answer. A. I cannot say what they should or 16 17 shouldn't have done, because, as I 18 said, what they were doing was pursuant to an arbitration award, which is 19 different than, you know, their policy. 20 21 I know what the law requires, and I 22 know what the Department of Education's 23 DEO policy provides. And what I described is both what the law requires 24 25 and what the DOE's EEO policy provides.

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1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2
     BY MR. GRAFF:
          Q. Was the New York City Department
3
4
      of Education's EEO policy changed as a
      result of the vaccine mandate?
5
 6
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
                You can answer.
7
          A. Not that I'm aware of.
8
     BY MR. GRAFF:
9
10
          Q. One of the things you said that
      the appeals panel must look at is the
11
12
      applicant's circumstances.
                                  What is an
13
      applicant's circumstances?
14
          A. So I believe I was saying that
15
      in the context of undue hardship,
      right? So not everyone working for the
16
17
      DOE is performing the same job
18
      functions. Not everyone from the DOE
      is in as much of a front-facing
19
20
     position. Not everyone from the DOE is
21
      in a mission critical position. So you
22
      have to understand what this person's
23
      doing, by and large. You don't need to
      know every specific detail, but you
24
25
      generally need to understand. So, you
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1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 know, whether they were a classroom teacher, whether they were a school 3 administrator who did not work -- or I 4 should say a district administrator 5 6 that didn't work in a school. Whether 7 they were paraprofessionals providing support where they were interacting 8 frequently with children, or they were 9 10 someone providing support who, you know, was generally isolated from 11 12 children. All of those in the context of the DOE employee vaccine mandate 13 were factors we would look at or we 14 15 could look at if they were raised in the context of the appeal. 16 17 Q. What role did the New York City 18 Human Rights Law standards have in 19 determining whether to grant or deny a 20 religious exemption to the appeal's panel determination? 21 22 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 23 You can answer. A. We -- obviously, if -- if -- if 24 25 the City Human Rights Law required an

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 appeal, we grant it. It was granted. If the agency -- if the employee did 3 4 not provide an explanation that would 5 satisfy the requirements, the City 6 Human Rights Law, for a reasonable 7 accommodation, and it was denied on that basis, it would be denied. And if 8 there was undue hardship sufficient to 9 10 meet the standard of City Human Rights Law, the -- same thing. Then -- then 11 12 it would be -- it could be denied on undue hardship grounds if that's what 13 14 the agency had chosen. 15 BY MR. GRAFF: Q. Does the City Human Rights Law 16 17 require an interactive process 18 regarding religious exemptions or religious accommodations? 19 20 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 21 You can answer. A. They -- the City Commission on 22 23 Human, Rights, which is the agency that interprets the City Human Rights Law, 24 25 does not use the term "interactive

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1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      process." They use the term
      "cooperative dialogue" to describe what
 3
 4
      the human rights law provides. But it
 5
      does require a cooperative dialogue.
 6
     BY MR. GRAFF:
 7
          Q. Do you know if cooperative
      dialogue was performed between the New
 8
 9
      York City Department of Education and
10
      people who sought religious
      accommodations for the vaccine mandate?
11
12
                              Objection.
                MS. LINNANE:
13
                You can answer.
14
          A. Certainly, by the time -- I'm
15
      speaking for the appeals I reviewed,
16
      yes.
17
     BY MR. GRAFF:
18
          Q. How was the -- how was the
19
      dialogue performed?
          A. So, basically, what would happen
20
21
      is the Department of Education would
22
      advise employees of the necessity of an
23
      accommodation or the necessity
      requesting the accommodation if they
24
25
      believed they were entitled to one and
```

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E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

2 the process by which it would be done.

The employees, in turn, would provide 3

that request along -- and also that 4

5 information, as I understand it,

6 solicited supporting materials.

7 employee then -- would then provide

those supporting materials in that 8

9 request to the Department of Education.

10 There was then some kind of review

process. As I said, I cannot tell you 11

12 the nuts and bolts of it with respect

to the arbitration award. 13

arbitration process.

But with respect to the cases that we received on the Citywide Panel, they usually involve the Department of Education asking the employee to give the panel particular information, if they hadn't already done so, in the

And then it also involved the Department of Education providing information about their reasons that they believe the denial was appropriate, if they chose to do so.

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E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

So by the time it got to us, there were multiple layers of back and forth between the two parties. It was consistent with the requirements of the Human Rights Law.

Q. Cooperative dialogue, doesn't it mean more that you try and find a solution to an accommodation, if one could be granted, as opposed to determining whether or not it should be granted?

> MS. LINNANE: Objection.

You can answer.

A. In certain context, that could be the case. That is not universally These reasonable accommodation true. requests were for a very specific thing, which was an exemption to a public health mandate. So that's what was being reviewed. And I -- you know, I think that, you know, as I understand it, and, you know, courts have since confirmed this, that the cooperative dialogue proceed, you know --

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1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2
      appropriately proceeds in the manner
      that I described.
3
4
     BY MR. GRAFF:
5
          Q. What role did the New York State
 6
      Human Rights Law standards have in the
7
      appeals panel determinations?
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
8
9
                You can answer.
10
          A. New York State Human Rights, did
     you ask?
11
12
     BY MR. GRAFF:
13
          Q. Yes.
14
          A. So the New York State Human
15
      Rights Law, as I understand it, is
16
      either equal to or less or covers less
17
      than what the City Human Rights Law
18
      does. So it was essentially covered
19
      within the scope of the City Human
20
      Rights Law, right?
                          That there's no --
      as far as I understand it, there's no
21
22
      directive of the State Human Rights Law
23
      that is broader or more expansive than
      the City Human Rights Law in this
24
25
      context.
                In this context. But -- and
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E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

the same thing. The federal is the same thing. Title 7 in this case was actually far less expansive than the City Human Rights Law in terms of particularly undue hardship.

Q. Was there any training provided to the appeals panel members regarding examining these applications?

A. There were -- well, there were two things. One was all the appeals panel members were provided copies of the EEOC guidance regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, because it was a comprehensive set of quidance on what, obviously, at the time was a very new and emerging issue. So that was a way the panel members could, in the very tight timeframe we had in the context of a public health emergency, get up to speed on some of the specific COVID considerations.

All members of the panel were either EEO or legal professionals who had been extensively trained previously

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1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      in the City Human Rights Law, the
      City's policies and procedures. Some
 3
 4
      had far more training than others,
 5
      depending on, particularly, the agency
 6
      they came from and their role.
 7
      everyone had the baseline of training
      of understanding the RA process, of
 8
      understanding the City's policy, which,
 9
10
      again, is equal to or sometimes more
      expansive even than the City Human
11
12
      Rights Law. So they all brought that
13
      knowledge in, and we were focused more
14
      on making sure the panel understood
15
      COVID-specific considerations.
          Q. Were you a member of the panel?
16
17
          A. Yes.
18
          Q. Did you grant any application?
19
                MS. LINNANE:
                               Objection.
20
                You can answer.
21
          A. Yes.
22
     BY MR. GRAFF:
23
          Q. Any -- I'm sorry. Go ahead.
          A. I voted -- you know, every case,
24
25
      every application we saw had been
```

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 denied previously. And so, essentially, it was like an appellate 3 4 judge voting to reverse, and I did that 5 on many cases. 6 Q. Do you remember any New York City Department of Education employee 7 cases? 8 9 A. Yes. 10 Q. Ultimately -- so did it have to take a majority of the panel or a 11 12 unanimous of the panel to grant? A. It was a majority. So two out 13 14 of the three agencies would control in 15 the event of a disagreement. And there were only three votes, so there was 16 17 never a tie. 18 (Reporter requested clarification.) 19 Q. If a person was granted a 20 religious exemption from the appeals panel, did that employee work in a 21 classroom? 22 23 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 24 You can answer. 25 A. I do not know that. The

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 Department of Education would know that 3 all. Again, what we were reviewing on 4 the Citywide Appeals Panel is whether 5 or not they should get an exemption. 6 What happened after that point was up 7 to the Department of Education. BY MR. GRAFF: 8 Q. So the appeals panel would grant 9 10 the exemption and refer that back to the Department of Education, and then 11 12 the implementation of that exemption 13 was left to the Department of 14 Education, correct? 15 A. Right. MS. LINNANE: Objection. 16 17 A. In this context, we were -- the 18 way to visualize it was we were the 19 appellate body reversing the decision. 20 And then the implementation would be 21 for the agency or entity that made the 22 decision. 23 BY MR. GRAFF: Q. Are you aware of how many people 24 25 received exemptions from the Department

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      of Education, generally?
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
 3
 4
                You can answer.
          A. No.
 5
 6
     BY MR. GRAFF:
 7
          Q. Okay. Are you aware that only
      nine Catholics out of the 455 who
 8
      applied were granted exemption?
 9
10
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
                You can answer.
11
12
          A. As I said, I do not see how you
      could have a statistic of how many
13
      Catholics did or did not receive an
14
15
      accommodation. If that's such a
      statistic, I would not understand how
16
17
      it could be devised without serving all
18
      employees who provide an accommodation.
     BY MR. GRAFF:
19
20
          Q. Can you explain or are you aware
21
      of why only a 145 people out of 3,396
22
      people were granted religious
23
      exceptions?
          A. I -- again, I don't know if
24
25
      those are the statistics. I do know
```

9

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24

25

reviewed.

E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

2 | that we were in a public health

3 | emergency. I know from my review of

4 DOE requests that the Department of

5 | Education was in a particularly

6 challenging position that allowed for a

7 | compelling argument with regard to

8 denial on the ground of undue hardship.

So I would imagine, as all of these laws allowed in a situation where a public agency and a public health emergency needed to, under the criteria laid out by a public health authority, safely provide certain services and needed those personnel to do those services, that there would be a great deal of denials on the ground of undue hardship. And that also matches what I

Q. Did you examine any requests -requests for religious exemption
separate and apart from your role on
the appeal panel?

recall from the, you know, dozens if

not a hundred plus DOE appeals that I

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 MS. LINNANE: Objection. I'm going to caution the witness 3 4 not to disclose any information 5 that could be considered 6 privileged pursuant to the 7 doctrine of attorney-client privilege. 8 A. And I'm going to ask you to do a 9 10 better job of letting me know the scope you're thinking of. I obviously 11 12 reviewed many reasonable accommodation 13 requests. BY MR. GRAFF: 14 15 Q. I'm sorry. So you reviewed requests for religious exemptions as an 16 17 appeals panel member, correct? 18 A. Correct. 19 Q. Separate and apart from that, 20 did you review religious exemption 21 requests regarding the vaccine mandate 22 before the appeals panel was implemented? 23 I'm going to 24 MS. LINNANE: 25 direct the witness not answer any

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 questions with respect to his role as a managing attorney of 3 4 the New York City Law Department 5 or with his role with the New 6 York City Law Department before 7 the implementation of the Citywide Panel. 8 A. I would -- and I will say that 9 10 the only time I was making determinations as to whether an appeal 11 12 should be granted or denied was in 13 my -- in respect to the COVID-19 14 pandemic and those health orders -- was 15 in my role as a member of the appeals I may have provided legal 16 panel. 17 advise, but, as you can imagine as a 18 lawyer, you understand, again, without 19 getting into substance of any of that 20 advice, we don't advise the client what the decision should be. We advise the 21 22 client as to legal context. 23 BY MR. GRAFF: Q. I'll show you what's going to be 24 25 marked Exhibit E as in elephant.

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
      you recognize this document?
 2
          A. Yes.
                   This appears to be a DOE
 3
      position statement submitted to the
 4
 5
      Citywide Appeals Panel.
 6
 7
                 (Plaintiff's Exhibit E,
                New York City DOE Position
 8
               Statement, was marked for
 9
               identification.)
10
11
12
          Q. And it's labeled DEF
13
      0005532000555.
14
          A. Okay.
15
          Q. Do you know when this was
16
      created?
17
          A. I -- I have no idea.
          Q. And you said this document looks
18
      like one that would've been submitted
19
20
      to the appeals panel; is that correct?
          A. Correct.
21
          Q. Did you examine similar ones
22
23
      from the DOE regarding other employees?
24
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
25
                You can answer.
```

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
          A. Yes, I did.
     BY MR. GRAFF:
 3
 4
          Q. Were they all similar except for
 5
      the top four lines at the first page?
 6
                MS. LINNANE:
                               Objection.
                You can answer.
 7
          A. I don't recall.
 8
     BY MR. GRAFF:
 9
10
          Q. Do you know if the DOE put out a
      position statement for each employee
11
12
      individual, or was it a general
13
      statement regarding all employees?
14
                MS. LINNANE:
                               Objection.
15
                You can answer.
          A. You would need to ask them.
16
17
      my understanding when I reviewed them
18
      was there was always at least some
      minimal, as you said, at the top. At
19
      the very least, there were specific --
20
      there were specific information
21
      provided to us about the role and the
22
23
      location and things like that, because
      that was, you know, that was important
24
25
      to our review.
```

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
     BY MR. GRAFF:
          Q. I'm going to show you the second
 3
 4
             There are three bullets at the
 5
      top. It's DEF000554. Do you see that
 6
      on your screen?
 7
          A. Yes.
          O. And these talk about the undue
 8
      hardship to the DOE if a religious
 9
10
      exception were to the granted to the
      plaintiff. Do you see that?
11
12
          A. Yes, I do.
          Q. Is there -- it talks about other
13
14
      -- the first bullet says, "Other
15
      mitigation measures provide
16
      insufficient protection particularly
17
      when transmission rates were high."
18
      Are you aware of any mitigation
      measures that were examined by the DOE
19
20
      regarding exemptions?
21
                MS. LINNANE:
                              Objection.
22
                You can answer.
23
          A. My -- that wouldn't be for the
      DOE to do necessarily, other than to
24
25
      evaluate whether they could keep
```

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 employees away from the vulnerable population at the time, which was the 3 4 children in closed spaces. My understanding of the mandate, 5 6 and it was issued by the Board of 7 Health and the City's Health Commission, was that based on the 8 available data and information at the 9 10 time, the mandate was issued because the -- based on the understanding that 11 12 where we were in the pandemic when it happened and the availability of 13 vaccines meant that the lesser 14 15 mitigation measures would not be as effective as having a vaccinated 16 17 workforce. 18 Those details, of course, are spelled out, I think, primarily in --19 20 I believe they were aware as clauses in 21 the mandate. But that was my 22 understanding. Those determinations 23 had been made by the City's Department of Health and Board of Health. 24 25 BY MR. GRAFF:

E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

2 Q. The second paragraph, second bullet says that, "State law and 3 4 applicable collective bargaining agreements including the operation of 5 6 seniority systems generally limit DOE's 7 ability to transfer staff between schools except in limited circumstances 8 9 not applicable here." 10 Are you aware of whether the DOE sought to negotiate with the unions to 11 12 create the flexibility to transfer 13 staff?

MS. LINNANE: Objection.

You can answer.

A. No, I'm not. That would be a question you'd have to ask DOE.

BY MR. GRAFF:

1

14

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Q. The third bullet says, "More than 3,300 DOE staff have requested religious exemptions far greater than the number of requests for medical exemptions." Was one of the undue hardships that there were too many people who sought requests?

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 A. Yes, that there was a large number of requested exemptions. And in 3 4 particular, at the time we were 5 reviewing these particular requests, 6 that there was, as I understood it, 7 challenges in insuring that we had the teachers that were necessary in the 8 City of New York and the DOE to allow 9 10 for return for in-person instruction without running a foul of the public 11 12 health mandate. Q. But not all 3,300 DOE staff had 13 14 bona fide religious objections; isn't that correct? 15 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 16 17 You can answer. A. I wouldn't know without 18 reviewing all 3,300. 19 BY MR. GRAFF: 20 Q. Do you know if any students were 21 22 working -- were learning remotely 23 during the 2021, 2022 school year? MS. LINNANE: Objection. 24 25 You can answer.

E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

1

2 A. I cannot recall the specific timeline of when we went from -- by 3 "we," I mean the Department of 4 Education -- but when the Department of 5 6 Education went from purely remote to 7 hybrid to in-person. I do know that by the fall of 2021, which was when these 8 appeals were coming to the appeals 9 10 panel, the schools were open, and children were returning to school. 11 12 BY MR. GRAFF: Q. The second paragraph in -- on 13 14 page 2 of the document talks about 15 allowing such employees to remain in school settings unvaccinated even with 16 17 other safequards like masking and 18 testing would present an unacceptable risk to school children, staff, and 19 20 others. Do you know if there was science behind that? 21 22 A. Yes. 23 O. What was the science? Objection. 24 MS. LINNANE: 25 You can answer.

1

E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

A. There were federal, state, and 2 local agencies that employed scores of 3 public health experts that were looking 4 at this information, looking at the 5 6 data, and making this determination. The vaccine -- the DOE employee vaccine 7 mandate was based on this precise thing 8 9 that there was a particular 10 vulnerability to the younger 11 populations. There were particular 12 concerns, especially in a place like the City of New York, that had seen an 13 14 extreme spike in hospitalizations and 15 death amongst unvaccinated populations, that there was a public health risk 16 17 that vaccines would significantly 18 mitigate. And my understanding --19 again, I'm not the Department of Health 20 -- but my understanding through this 21 process was that, in fact, the data bore that out, that when vaccines and 22 23 mandates were implemented, that we saw -- even when there were -- there was 24 25 circulation of COVID -- there were less

E. J. EICHENHOLTZ

2 severe cases, far less severe cases,

3 | far less hospitalizations, and far less

4 deaths. So we did not have the sort of

5 | public health crisis we had early in

6 | the pandemic, I believe, was April,

7 May 2000 -- 2020.

BY MR. GRAFF:

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Q. Are you aware of any other school district in New York State that

had a vaccine mandate?A. So I don't know whether or not

A. So I don't know whether or not they did. I will say that I believe there is a reason that if you ever look at the New York State Education Law, virtually every rule that applies to school districts seems to carve out or have a different set of rules for the city school district and the City of New York. And it is a unique district and a unique population. So I would

not use any other school district as a comparative. Some may have, some may

24 not have.

Q. The last paragraph on the second

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 page talks about, "Our experience in providing exemptions in accordance with 3 4 the arbitration award has only confirmed that creating such 5 6 alternative assignments poses an undue 7 hardship." Do you have any idea what the 9 Department of Education's experience 10 was at that time? A. My understanding of this 11 12 particular statement and paragraph was that through the arbitration award, 13 14 there was an allowance for essentially 15 offsite, you know -- essentially alternative assignments where 16 17 pedagogical staff were allowed to work 18 in offices while the public health order remained in place. And that, you 19 20 know, both that, you know -- the 21 productivity and the work that could be 22 assigned to those individuals was low 23 and that, you know, and that it essentially was not benefitting the 24 25 Department of Education, and, in fact,

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#:	1565		

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 was, you know -- at this point, they were presenting with as it states here, 3 4 a staffing concern, because they needed 5 staff to be physically present in 6 indoor spaces with children. 7 And that's why I think that's what they're saying. As I understand 8 it, that, you know, given the number of 9 10 people they moved outside of the schools, they were, you know -- there 11 12 were issues staffing the schools. That's my understanding. 13 14 Q. Do you have any idea why the 15 plaintiff was denied a religious exemption? 16 17 A. Yes. 18 O. Why? 19 A. I think the reasons we received 20 from the Department of Education were 21 in the document you just showed me 22 moments ago, the position statement. 23 And the appeals panel unanimously affirmed on the ground that the 24 25 Department of Education demonstrated

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2	undue hardship if the plaintiff were
3	granted a reasonable accommodation.
4	Q. So the decision to deny her a
5	reasonable accommodation based upon her
6	religious beliefs had nothing to do
7	with her religious beliefs?
8	A. Correct. I see no indication in
9	her file that anyone made a finding at
10	any point in this process that her
11	religious beliefs themselves would not
12	qualify her for an accommodation. The
13	focus was on undue hardship in her
14	case.
15	Q. If, at any point during the
16	process, her religious beliefs were
17	challenged, would that have been
18	appropriate?
19	MS. LINNANE: Objection.
20	You can answer.
21	A. I'm not going to speculate on
22	what, you know I've not read her
23	paperwork in the depth and with the
24	attention I would need to say yes,

absent undue hardship, she would get an

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 accommodation or wouldn't in my view. Nor is my view at this stage worth 3 anything other than anything. 4 5 BY MR. GRAFF: 6 Q. If during the appeal before the arbitration arbitrator, the SAMS 7 arbitrator, there was no argument that 8 an undue hardship would've occurred to 9 10 grant her an exemption, would that have been an appropriate argument for the 11 12 DOE to make regarding this plaintiff? MS. LINNANE: Objection. 13 14 You can answer. 15 A. So if -- yeah, there was no -the DOE could raise undue hardship at 16 17 any point. And I also understand, like 18 I said, the SAMS arbitration, as you 19 referred to them, were under a specific 20 agreement that required certain things and didn't -- that sort of governed it 21 22 in a different way. So when it was

presented to us, it was presented,

obviously, more like the legal --

entirely, purely legal and policy-

23

24

25

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 based requests that you would see in the ordinary course of business at the 3 DOE or in the state. 4 5 BY MR. GRAFF: 6 Q. Were you a part of the decision 7 process to arbitrate the end of the impasse and negotiations between the 8 UFT and the DOE? 9 10 MS. LINNANE: Objection. A. No. No. 11 12 BY MR. GRAFF: Q. From your experience, are you 13 14 aware of any arbitrations between the 15 UFT and the DOE relating to ending impasses and negotiation? 16 17 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 18 You can answer. 19 A. If there is an impasse, 20 generally, as I understand it, under, 21 you know, the state and local law and 22 DOE governs primarily -- pedagogues are 23 governed by state law -- is that if there is an impasse, there is attempted 24 25 mediation. Failing mediation, there is

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 an arbitration proceeding, and the arbitrator will implement, you know --3 an award will be issued that will 4 5 implement the agreement. 6 The reason for that, as I 7 understand it, is that public employees, for very compelling policy 8 reasons, are prohibited from engaging 9 10 in job actions like strikes. And we want to keep them on the job. The 11 12 legislature -- when I say "we" there, I'm talking about the state. And that 13 14 because they don't have that option, 15 the law requires, essentially, that if the two parties can't agree, that a 16 17 neutral arbitrator resolves that 18 dispute. BY MR. GRAFF: 19 20 Q. I'm going to take a five-minute 21 break. I have one exhibit that I just 22 want to show. I have to pull it up, 23 but I think I'm done otherwise. Give me five minutes. Right now, I have 24 25 11:22. Can we come back at 11:30?

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
      Does that work for you guys?
                MS. LINNANE:
                              That's
 3
 4
          perfect. Thank you.
 5
                (A recess was taken.)
     BY MR. GRAFF:
 6
 7
          Q. I just want to show you -- let
      me know when you see it on your screen.
 8
          A. Okay. I see it.
 9
10
          Q. Okay. I'm going to mark this
      Exhibit F.
11
12
13
                (Plaintiff's Exhibit F,
14
                COVID-19 Religious Exemption
15
          Application Determination, was
16
          marked for identification.)
17
          O. This is Document 1-4 in the --
18
      on the court docket. Are you aware
19
      that the New York City Department of
20
      Education made an initial determination
21
22
      regarding the plaintiff's request for
23
      religious exemption?
24
                MS. LINNANE: Objection.
25
                You can answer.
```

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
          A. As I said, I'm not aware of the
      precise mechanics of how the process
 3
      worked under the arbitration award.
 4
     BY MR. GRAFF:
 5
 6
          Q. And you're talking about the
 7
      arbitration award issued by Marty
      Scheinman?
 8
                    There was an arbitration.
 9
10
      I don't know who issued it offhand, but
      it was an arbitration award that
11
12
      resolved, I believe -- it was impact
      bargaining over the implementation of
13
14
      the COVID employee vaccine mandate for
15
      DOE employees.
          Q. Okay. And then I'm going to
16
17
      show you what's marked Exhibit G.
18
                (Plaintiff's Exhibit G,
19
20
                Torrey Arbitration Award,
          was marked for identification.)
21
22
23
          A. Uh-hum.
          Q. Have you ever seen a document
24
      like this before?
25
```

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
          A. Yes.
          Q. Where have you seen this
 3
      document?
 4
 5
                MS. LINNANE:
                              Objection.
 6
          That wasn't the question that you
          just asked.
 7
          A. So I saw this -- I've seen this
 8
      just over time in various records that
 9
10
      arose out of the DOE reasonable
      accommodation, both appeals. Some
11
12
      people provided this, although, you
      know, I want to make it clear it was
13
14
      not relevant to us. But just over the
15
      course of time when I understood, you
      know, various contexts when reviewing
16
      -- not reviewing, but, like, I
17
      understand this to be the form of the
18
      arbitration award the DOE labor
19
20
      arbitrator used. I've seen this form
      before.
21
     BY MR. GRAFF:
22
23
          Q. So this -- are you aware that
      this is the type of form that would be
24
25
      used by a Scheinman Arbitration
```

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ Mediation Service arbitrator in 2 determining an appeal of a religious 3 4 exemption for a DOE employee? A. Yes. It's my understanding 5 -- is that documents like this were 6 issued by the arbitrators. Whether it 7 was Scheinman or there were others, I 8 9 couldn't tell you. 10 Q. Is it your understanding that the arbitrator would be examining an 11 12 appeal of a denial of an exemption? MS. LINNANE: Objection. 13 14 You can answer. 15 A. Yeah. As I've said previously, I do not recall or understand the 16 17 particular mechanics of how this 18 worked. My recollection was that there was a desire for a labor arbitration --19 a labor arbitrator to make the decision 20 on reasonable accommodations. 21 BY MR. GRAFF: 22 23 Q. What is the basis of your understanding of that? 24 25 A. I -- as I sit here, I could not

1 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ 2 tell you. At some point, I understood that's, you know, that's how this 3 process worked. It is -- it was not 4 5 typical for a reasonable accommodation 6 to be decided by a labor arbitrator, and this award provided for that. 7 Q. Was it your understanding that 8 the DOE was relying upon the 9 10 arbitrators to grant or deny exemptions? 11 12 MS. LINNANE: Objection. 13 You can answer. 14 A. Again, I do not have knowledge 15 of the particular mechanics of how it got to the arbitrator. Whether or not 16 17 there was an opportunity pre-18 arbitration to grant it or how that 19 worked, you would have to ask the DOE. 20 BY MR. GRAFF: Q. And if the DOE said that all 21 22 religious exemptions were denied 23 initially by the DOE, would that -could that be true? 24 25 MS. LINNANE: Objection.

```
1
                 E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
 2
          A. I'd be speculating. It's why I
 3
      say you should ask the DOE. I
 4
      certainly would not know how that
 5
      process worked.
 6
             MR. GRAFF: Okay. I have no
      other questions. I appreciate your
 7
 8
      time, Mr. Eichenholtz.
 9
                THE WITNESS: Thank you.
                MS. LINNANE: So we're all
10
11
          set.
12
             (Time noted: 11:36 a.m.)
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
```

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2	INSTRUCTIONS TO WITNESS
3	
4	Please read your deposition over
5	carefully and make any necessary
6	corrections. You should state the
7	reason in the appropriate space on the
8	errata sheet for any corrections that
9	are made.
10	After doing so, please sign the
11	errata sheet and date it.
12	You are signing same subject to
13	the changes you have noted on the errata
14	sheet, which will be attached to your
15	deposition.
16	It is imperative that you return
17	the original errata sheet to the
18	deposing attorney within thirty (30)
19	days of receipt of the deposition
20	transcript by you. If you fail to do
21	so, the deposition transcript may be
22	deemed to be accurate and may be used in
23	court.
24	
25	

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ
2	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
3	STATE OF NEW YORK)
4	:SS
5	COUNTY OF)
6	I, ERIC J. EICHENHOLTZ, hereby certify
7	that I have read the transcript of my
8	testimony taken under oath on
9	April 4, 2025, that the transcript is a
10	true, complete and correct record of
11	what was asked, answered and said during
12	my testimony under oath, and that the
13	answers on the record as given by me are
14	true and correct, except for the
15	corrections or changes in form or
16	substance, if any, noted in the attached
17	Errata Sheet.
18	
19	ERIC J. EICHENHOLTZ
20	
21	Signed and subscribed to
22	before me, this day
23	of
24	
25	Notary Public

		69
1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ	
2	I N D E X	
3		
4		
5	EXAMINATION	6
6	BY MR. GRAFF	
7		
8		
9	(Plaintiff's Exhibit A,	10
10	Notice of Deposition, was	
11	marked for identification.)	
12		
13	(Plaintiff's Exhibit B,	25
14	Declaration of Impasse, was	
15	marked for identification.)	
16		
17	(Plaintiff's Exhibit C,	38
18	Appeal to Appeals Panel, was	
19	marked for identification.)	
20		
21	(Plaintiff's Exhibit D,	45
22	Reasonable Accommodation Appeal	
23	Determination, was marked for	
24	identification.)	
25		

1	E. J. EICHENHOLTZ	
2	(Plaintiff's Exhibit E,	66
3	New York City DOE Position	
4	Statement, was marked for	
5	identification.)	
6		
7	(Plaintiff's Exhibit F,	81
8	COVID-19 Religious Exemption	
9	Application Determination, was	
10	marked for identification.)	
11		
12	(Plaintiff's Exhibit G,	82
13	Torrey Arbitration Award, was	
14	marked for identification.)	
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1	
2	CERTIFICATE
3	I, CEITA LAZAR, a stenographic
4	reporter and Notary Public within and
5	for the State of New York, do hereby
6	certify:
7	That the witness(es) whose testimony
8	is hereinbefore set forth was duly sworn
9	by me, and the foregoing transcript is a
10	true record of the testimony given by
11	such witness(es).
12	I further certify that I am not
13	related to any of the parties to this
14	action by blood or marriage, and that I
15	am in no way interested in the outcome
16	of this matter.
17	
18	
19	Celtatana
20	
21	CEITA LAZAR Dated: April 23, 2025
22	20000.V 11P121 10, 1010
23	
24	
25	

1	Dunata Chast
1	Errata Sheet
2	
3	NAME OF CASE: x LORRAINE MASCIARELLI -against- NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
4	DATE OF DEPOSITION: 04/04/2025
5	NAME OF WITNESS: ERIC J. EICHENHOLTZ
6	Reason Codes:
7	1. To clarify the record.
8	2. To conform to the facts.
9	3. To correct transcription errors.
10	Page Line Reason
11	From to
12	Page Line Reason
13	From to
14	Page Line Reason
15	From to
16	Page Line Reason
17	From to
18	Page Line Reason
19	From to
20	Page Line Reason
21	From to
22	Page Line Reason
23	From to
24	
25	
	

93Index: (30)-amongst

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position notice marked 10:2,4	11:30 80:25	35:4	addresses 26:17	agreements 70:5
89:9	11:36 86:13	8107 9:6	addressing	ahead 14:25
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