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Contact: Jo Ann LeSage Nelson
joann@albanypr.com
Pierce Communications
518.427.1186 or 518.928.4134 (cell)

Pattison, Sampson, Ginsberg & Griffin wins another decision for RPI regarding mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations

Troy, N.Y. – Michael E. Ginsberg, Esq. and Rhiannon I. Spencer, Esq. of Pattison, Sampson, Ginsberg & Griffin successfully defended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute against a complaint to the New York State Division of Human Rights charging the university with unlawful discriminatory practice related to her creed. The decision is another victory for RPI and other colleges and universities that have enacted policies in an attempt to protect their communities.

Student Nicolette B. Glut claimed in August 2021 that, because of her religion, she was denied a reasonable accommodation from RPI's mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy that required her to be vaccinated in order to enroll. The policy, which applied to students, faculty, and staff, was implemented in an effort to contain the COVID-19 virus, and did not provide for religious exemptions to the vaccination requirement. The Division of Human Rights determined there was no probable cause to believe that RPI had engaged in or is engaging in the unlawful discriminatory practice Glut claimed.

Earlier this year, the Pattison firm successfully represented the university against a suit brought by three former students who claimed their religious freedoms under the First Amendment and New York State Human Rights Law were violated when their requests for exemptions to the vaccination policy were denied. In a precedent setting case of first impression, the New York State Supreme Court in Warren County dismissed the complaint in its entirety and awarded summary judgment to RPI, declaring that the university had not violated the law or its own antidiscrimination policy.

The investigation in this most recent case established that RPI considered Glut's request for exemption but ultimately denied that request as part of its vaccination mandate. The decision noted that RPI initially granted the religious exemption and "only changed its policy after it assessed that COVID-19 was evolving and becoming more infectious."

"This is another victory for colleges and universities in the state and further solidifies their ability to protect the health and welfare of their communities," said Ginsberg.

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