

## THE EPOCH TIMES



A pharmacy student prepares a Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine in Los Angeles, Calif., on May 7, 2021. (Frederic J. Brown/AFP via Getty Images)

US NEWS PREMIUM

# Largest US Health Care Union Will Fight Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccines

BY JACK PHILLIPS June 23, 2021 Updated: June 23, 2021

**A** Print

The president of the largest union of health care workers in the United States says the organization will fight against companies requiring mandatory [COVID-19](#) vaccines for employees.

George Gresham, president of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East—which describes itself as the largest health care union in the country—said hospital systems don’t have the right to mandate vaccines for employees. The union, which is based in New York, also represents hundreds of thousands of nurses and caregivers in New Jersey, Florida, Washington, Maryland, and Massachusetts.

“Whether there is a legal challenge that we can make, or whether it’s just a pure organizational challenge that we can make, we are not going to just give in,” Gresham [told](#) local news website Gothamist this week.

Earlier in June, NewYork–Presbyterian Hospital in New York had mandated that its employees be vaccinated against the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) virus, which causes COVID-19, coming as other hospital systems across the United States have done the same.

The union president said that he’s vaccinated against the virus and has encouraged union members to get vaccinated as well. However, he told the website that workers “have the right to make their decision about their own health,” and met with NewYork-Presbyterian Chief Executive Steve Corwin to discuss unvaccinated union members’ concerns about the company’s policy.

It’s not just 1199SEIU that has opposed mandatory shots, as the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) released a statement [opposing vaccine mandates](#).

“NYSNA strongly opposes the mandatory vaccination of health care providers for COVID-19 as a condition of employment or as a state or federal mandate,” the union states on its website.

According to a memo, NewYork–Presbyterian informed its workers that it would require them to get at least their first COVID-19 vaccine shot by Sept. 1.

“We care for sick people—some critically so—every day, and we are responsible for their safety while in our care,” the mandate notice [states](#). “The stakes in this matter are high, and the evidence is clear that getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is the most important and responsible action we can take as NYP team members for the safety and well-being of our patients and visitors, our communities, and ourselves.”

Gresham’s comments come after employees of Houston Methodist Hospital in Texas challenged the system’s vaccine requirement, which was rejected by a judge several weeks ago. A Houston Methodist spokesperson has since [told](#) The Epoch Times in an email that 153 employees were fired on June 22 or had quit during the previous two-week period.

“Many of my clients actually contracted COVID as a result of treating COVID-positive patients, and the thank you that Methodist Hospital gives them now is a pink slip,” said Jared Woodfill, an attorney representing the employees.

NewYork–Presbyterian didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.