

**Testimony of
Henry Garrido, Executive Director
of District Council 37
at the Senate Standing Committees on Internet and Technology
Thursday, January 15, 2026**

Good afternoon Chair Kristen Gonzalez, and fellow Committee members. My name is Henry Garrido, Executive Director of District Council 37 (DC 37). We are here to raise our concerns about the use of Artificial Intelligence programs that pose a fundamental challenge to the rights, security, and dignity of our 150,000 members and the public we serve.

Implementation of AI in the public sector is a bellwether of private sector trends. Employers are deploying AI for purposes of algorithmic management, surveillance, automated decision-making, and the replacement of human labor, often without transparency, accountability, or worker input.

Managers at city agencies, such as NYC Health and Hospitals and the Department of Social Services, are aggressively introducing AI in work that deals directly with the health and welfare of the public. A recent audit revealed that an AI tool at the Administration of Children Services (ACS) was trained on data a decade old, and used factors that are clear proxies for race and socioeconomic status. The ACS algorithm does not empower social workers; it undermines their professional expertise with a biased, opaque system.

The Union has the following concerns about AI in the public and private sectors:

- **Job Displacement and Automation:** Many of our members hold titles highly vulnerable to automation, such as data entry and customer service. The City's drive for efficiency will inevitably target these roles, threatening the livelihoods of thousands of our members.
- **De-skilling and De-professionalization:** When a professional is compelled to defer to a flawed algorithm, their expertise is devalued. Reliance on AI can turn highly skilled professionals into mere monitors of a machine, de-skilling the workforce and degrading the quality of public services.
- **Algorithmic Management and Surveillance:** AI gives management an unprecedented toolkit for monitoring and controlling the workforce. This can create a digital Taylorism that intensifies work and erodes autonomy. Most insidiously, these tools could be used for anti-union purposes. The National Labor Relations Board's General Counsel has warned that such surveillance presumptively violates employee rights, a principle we must extend to the public sector.
- **Bias and Discrimination:** This can lead to discriminatory outcomes in hiring and promotions, unfairly disadvantaging our members.
- **Eliminating Empathy from Government:** AI will never have the capacity to perform at the same level as human beings. AI cannot empathize with a client as a human being can. Our members **can** synthesize their education, training, and experience to think creatively and solve problems.

We call upon these committees to advance legislation that will codify robust worker protections across New York State, creating a worker-centered approach to technology where the purpose of new technology is to assist and empower workers, not to monitor, discipline, or replace them. That legislation must:

- Codified Bargaining Rights: Explicitly make the implementation and impacts of AI a mandatory subject of collective bargaining for all employees in New York State, over both its impacts and its design.
- It must prevent the use of AI for surveillance;
- It must ensure human oversight of all automated decisions; and
- It must protect against the displacement of bargaining unit members.
- It must create procurement standards that require any vendor selling AI systems to government agencies to provide full transparency and submit to independent audits for bias and effectiveness.
- It must explicitly prevent the use of AI and related technologies for algorithmic surveillance of private and public sector workers as well as those in publicly-funded non-profits.

DC 37 acknowledges that AI has the potential for great benefits, but its critical condition is that these benefits are only realized when workers, through their unions, have a voice and a measure of control. Our position is not to block technology, but to *govern* it through the power of our collective bargaining agreements.

The time to build the firewall is now, before these systems are deeply embedded in City and State operations.

Thank you.