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15 October 2021

Mr Frederik Gollob
Chairman
European Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong
theDesk, 5/F
United Centre
95 Queensway
Admiralty
Hong Kong

Dear Mr Gollob,

Vaccination in lieu of Regular Testing Arrangement

I write to appeal for your support in urging your member organisations and corporations to put in place the vaccination in lieu of regular testing (VRT) arrangement, under which all employees, except those medically unfit, should be required to receive vaccination or undergo regular virus testing at their own expense, in support of the Government's initiative to boost the vaccination rate of the working population in Hong Kong. For the continuation of economic activities and the prevention of a new wave of the epidemic in the community, it is essential for all organisations and corporations to get fully prepared and for their employees to get vaccinated or to undergo regular testing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged the world and has a huge impact on the daily lives of members of the public in Hong Kong. Boosting

our vaccination rate is the most effective way of reinvigorating and revitalizing our city. I deeply appreciate the various measures implemented by the business sector to encourage members of the public and their employees to get vaccinated such as granting “vaccination leave” to employees, and sponsoring gifts for lucky draws. As of today, over 4.5 million of the eligible population have received the first dose of vaccine. Around 1 million of eligible working population has yet to be vaccinated.

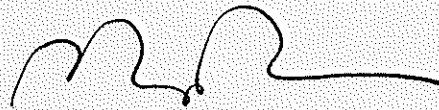
Under the Government’s current VRT arrangement, save for those who are unfit to receive COVID-19 vaccination because of medical conditions supported by a medical certificate, all government employees who have not received their first dose of vaccine are required to undergo polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid tests (PCR tests) using combined nasal and throat swabs at Community Testing Centres outside working hours on a bi-weekly basis at their own expense. For government employees who are unfit to receive COVID-19 vaccination due to medical conditions supported by valid medical certificates, they are required to undergo PCR tests bi-weekly with their tests fully funded on a reimbursement basis. Following the Government’s example, other key public service sectors have implemented the same arrangement since September 2021 for their employees. These included the Hospital Authority (HA), residential care homes for the elderly and persons with disabilities (RCHs), and schools. It is evident that the VRT arrangement has boosted the vaccination rates of these sectors in no time. The first dose take-up rates of the employees of the Government, HA, schools and the RCHs have increased significantly since the implementation of the VRT arrangement and have all exceeded 90% now.

The experience in the key public sectors proves that the VRT arrangement is an effective measure for boosting the vaccination rate of the working population. As a high vaccination rate of the workforce is crucial to controlling the epidemic’s threat to public health, ushering in a return to full economic activity and resuming cross-boundary and international travel, I strongly recommend that your members adopt the VRT arrangement in corporations and organisations. To facilitate vaccination of employees in the business sector, group booking of time slots for first dose of vaccine can be arranged at Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) for corporations/organisations. Although photo-taking is normally not allowed inside the CVCs, we may grant special permission to

corporations/organisations for vaccination publicity if required. For enquiries on the group booking arrangements, please contact the group booking hotline at 5275 9255 or send an email to cvc_group@csb.gov.hk. For information on the vaccination programme, please visit the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme website (<https://covidvaccine.gov.hk>).

As the epidemic remains severe around the globe, and in the face of the threat posed by mutant strains, there is a pressing need to boost and speed up the rate of vaccination of the working population to ensure our community is well protected against COVID-19. At this critical juncture, we count on your support for the VRT arrangement in the business sector. This is the key to the early revival of our economy and the return to normal life.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

(Patrick T K Nip)
Secretary for the Civil Service