



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

1 Centre Street, 19th floor, New York, NY 10007
(212) 669-8300 p (212) 669-4306 f
163 West 125th Street, 5th floor, New York, NY 10027
(212) 531-1609 p (212) 531-4615 f
www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov

Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

July 16, 2015

Hon. Bill de Blasio
Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Shola Olatoye
Chair, New York City Housing Authority
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Chair Olatoye:

I write in response to your recent announcement of a \$10m investment in free broadband for NYCHA residents in the Queensbridge, Red Hook, and Mott Haven Developments. In conjunction with the Obama Administration's ConnectHome program, this is a great step toward closing the digital divide for New York City's public housing residents. However, I must express my frustration on behalf of the 98 NYCHA developments and over 114,000 NYCHA residents in Manhattan that no Manhattan development has been selected as part of this program. Manhattan represents almost 30% of the total NYCHA population, and while overall broadband adoption numbers are slightly higher in Manhattan than in the other boroughs, an estimated 21% of Manhattan residents lack home broadband access, many of whom reside in public housing.

While I am strongly supportive of your desire to bring free broadband to needy New Yorkers, I am confused as to why an Administration committed to an equitable New York would ignore two whole boroughs with a plan like this. NYCHA residents should not be penalized for living in Manhattan. I have supported many past technology initiatives, including the LinkNYC program when I willingly ceded gigabit Wi-Fi kiosks in Manhattan to the benefit of the other boroughs. Furthermore, as you well know, programs like LinkNYC and EDC's wireless corridors do not offer meaningful penetration into homes. Thus, the ability to use these signals for things like homework, viewing educational videos, or filling out job applications is severely limited. I would hope that this Administration does not view these peripheral networks in Manhattan as acceptable alternatives to a high-speed connection in the home.

In closing, I also want to highlight an issue that I have raised with you multiple times: the need to accompany any new broadband infrastructure with meaningful training programs. "If you build it they will come" might work in baseball, but not for digital literacy. I hope that all of

these new programs will be accompanied by a commensurate investment in training programs to ensure that New Yorkers take advantage of the whole host of opportunities that broadband access can offer.

In the past two weeks, I have held two NYCHA town halls with residents from across the borough, and a common theme has been how to increase the use of technology not just for internal NYCHA management, but also for residents in tracking repairs, learning about planned facility work, and more. I will be working with local service providers and technology experts in my borough to complete a true needs assessment around technology issues, and I hope to partner with you in this effort.

We expect to see more details in the coming months around this NYCHA program, and to learn more about your efforts to provide truly universal broadband access across the five boroughs. Manhattan must be a part of this plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gale A. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gale A. Brewer

cc: Maya Wiley, Counsel to the Mayor