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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

**Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Testimony for the Committee on General Welfare
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Good morning. My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the Manhattan Borough President. Thank you to Chair Williams and the members of the Housing and Buildings Committee for the

My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the Manhattan Borough President. I'd like to thank Chair Levin and the Councilmembers on the Committee on General Welfare for the opportunity to testify today.

With Chair Levin, I am proud to have introduced Int. 89-2014, which would require the Department of Social Services to provide semiannual reports to the Council setting forth certain specific information.

I believe it is government's responsibility to address the needs of everyone, especially our most vulnerable populations. Adult Protective Services is a crucial part of the system designed to provide such protection. This bill is designed to provide this body the information necessary to make sure that it is fulfilling its role. Specifically, Intro. 89 would require that the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services/Human Resources Administration send the Council semi-annual reports regarding the status of applicants who were denied eligibility for APS services. These reports would include total referral numbers, the source of each referral, the number of referrals deemed ineligible for service, and the reasons why each case was deemed ineligible, as well as other important tracking information. This information would enable the Council to identify where, geographically and otherwise, where the most vulnerable populations are growing, and what problems stand between those New Yorkers and the assistance they need.

These adults, many of whom are older, with a range of disabilities, are an especially vulnerable and often overlooked part of our neighborhoods and communities. Susceptible to both mental and physical health problems, they are often the target of unfair business practices, abuse and harassment, and their condition often makes it difficult for them to fight back.

The right to live safely and independently in one's home provides stability without the risk of eviction. Over the years, my City Council and Manhattan Borough President staffs have worked collaboratively with APS to help many constituents stay in their homes; otherwise they may have become dependent on the shelter system. For example, three days before he was to be evicted from his apartment, a man I'll call "Vincent" was referred to my office by P'ALANTE Harlem, a nonprofit neighborhood housing assistance organization. Vincent had previously

sought assistance from Palladia and One Shot, two alternative HRA emergency aid services, and had been denied assistance by both.

Within a day, Rosalba Rodriguez of my office reached out to the Human Resources Administration and APS on his behalf. With the financial management and assistance that Vincent received from APS, he was able to avoid eviction and is still living in the same apartment today.

Vincent's story is a great example of the critical services APS can provide to our most vulnerable New Yorkers. It also highlights the fact that, without the collaborative efforts of APS, my office and P'ALANTE Harlem, Vincent would almost certainly have been evicted after having been denied assistance by two other HRA programs. I recommend that Intro. 89 be amended to include reporting on referrals to these programs and outcomes.

This bill provides data necessary to the Council's oversight role in assessing how effectively our city's programs are working together under the same agency umbrella. By reviewing the Commissioner's report, the City Council can ensure that APS receives the funding that it needs, and that it is providing the services those funds were allocated for.

As I stated earlier, by gathering the tracking data related to each case, we would garner important information that could reveal at-risk neighborhoods or trends that may necessitate a broader policy review.

The reporting required by this bill would go a long way to help improve the lives of one of New York's most vulnerable populations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am honored to have introduced Int. 89 with Chair Levin and I urge the Committee to vote in favor of the bill.