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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

April 7, 2015

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

Hon. Melissa Mark-Viverito
Speaker, New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Mark-Viverito:

Pursuant to Section 245 of the New York City Charter, I offer the following recommended modifications of the Preliminary Budget for consideration in the Executive Budget.

I want to thank the Mayor for presenting a Preliminary Budget that continues in the strong progressive direction that the enacted FY2015 City Budget set us on. The \$77.7 billion spending plan proposed by the Mayor in February addresses many of the issues facing our City, and in particular, the Borough of Manhattan. However, there are five areas in particular that I suggest additional attention be paid in preparing the Executive Budget. These areas are the continued creation and preservation of permanent affordable housing in Manhattan, addressing the homeless crisis, investing in the necessary infrastructure in our public schools, addressing the mental health needs of our school-aged children, and committing to the necessary capital improvements in our public libraries.

Since the release of the Preliminary Budget, my office has sought input from the members of our community to make sure any unmet needs were highlighted and could be addressed during the budget process. A large component of this review was the creation of the FY2016 Manhattan Borough Board Budget Priorities Report, as required by Section 241 of the New York City Charter. Based on the recommendations received from that process, I would like to propose the following potential modifications to the budget for inclusion in the Executive Budget.

After the release of Mayor de Blasio's "Housing New York" plan a year ago, my office took steps to support the creation of new affordable housing here in Manhattan in accordance with the plan. In particular, we submitted a list of sites our 12 Community Boards recommended of desired locations to build new affordable housing. I ask that we work to

ensure the needs of Manhattan communities are met in this budget, in locations where the community has expressed such a need. While the administration has proposed certain regulatory text amendments to spur development, and has proposed additional new developments citywide, the cost difficulties that discourage the development of full and permanent affordable housing in Manhattan remain. I recommend that a financial commitment dedicated to funding the development of new permanent affordable housing in Manhattan be incorporated into this budget.

Secondly, I want to commend the Mayor for recognizing that our homeless crisis is worsening and for taking steps to address it in an appropriate manner. The proposal for an additional \$28.4 million to be spent for rental assistance and support to move the homeless out of shelters and into permanent housing is an approach that is supported by the residents of Manhattan. And while these funds will be well spent in that manner, I feel that more will be necessary to combat our record levels of homelessness. According to the Independent Budget Office (IBO) the City now projects it will be able to move 6,551 households into permanent housing this year with these new funds. However, they also warn that the funding for additional placements in future years is uncertain, and therefore the long-term impact of these programs on the city's homeless shelter population—and shelter costs—may be less than anticipated. I recommend that the funds for rental assistance for the homeless be increased further in the Executive Budget proposal and that future funding be committed in the out years.

Shifting to education, we all realize that modern technology in schools is no longer a luxury reserved for the fortunate; it is a necessity for all school children to keep pace with their peers. I commend the Mayor for the proposed increases to public education, including \$340 million for expanded Universal Pre-K and \$190 million to further expand after school programs. However, the proposed budget falls short in funding for technology in schools. Enough schools already struggle with the costs of acquiring new equipment, but an equally alarming stumbling block to connectivity is the lack of adequate bandwidth in our aging school buildings. This makes it difficult or in some cases impossible for students to access the full benefits of new technology. The shortfall for new technology acquisition is something I plan to address in my Section 211 capital allocations where possible. However, I urge you to address the larger issue of aging infrastructure that limits the bandwidth in our older school buildings, including basic electricity in some cases. This would allow for an increase in STEM instruction in fully outfitted labs, and urban farming tutorial in electrical green houses and on green roofs.

Another crucial education issue this budget addresses is the overall well-being of our school-aged children by funding 128 Community Schools and 94 Renewal Schools. These innovative models for education recognize that our schools need to be more than just places of academic instruction for many children, and in addition they must provide supplementary resources to meet their needs. However, I would like to see this recognition go further with regards to the mental health needs of students and I recommend we offer professional and culturally competent mental health services in every public school. While the current proposal would provide mental health services as part of a host of additional resources available to students at these particular Community and Renewal schools, the need for access to

professional mental health services at all public schools is an issue we should address in this budget.

With regards to our public libraries, many of these buildings need basic improvements to modernize them and make them more user friendly for their visitors, while other buildings are aging at a rapid pace and must be renovated in order to ensure the health and safety of their patrons. Funding for library renovations in many cases falls on my fellow Borough Presidents and I, as well as the City Council, to commit capital dollars for our local libraries where we can. But the demonstrated needs here in Manhattan far outweigh what we are capable of funding. I recognize that the Preliminary Ten-Year Capital Plan recommends \$17 million for existing New York Public Library projects, but the total need at these facilities is likely somewhere in the hundreds of millions. I recommend that the Executive Budget express a commitment to fund additional public library renovations and improvements, closer in line with what is needed, as part of the Capital Plan.

While the continued lack of transparency in units of appropriation within the Preliminary Budget makes it difficult to identify potential cuts in the Borough of Manhattan, there are areas of the budget that could be reduced to offset any of my recommendations, and my office is happy to work with you to identify these areas.

Thank you for your consideration of these proposals, and I look forward to your response. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Deputy Manhattan Borough President, Joseph N. Garba, at 212-669-8300 or jgarba@manhattanbp.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gale A. Brewer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gale" being the most prominent.

Gale A. Brewer