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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

October 29, 2019

**Testimony of Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer to the Landmark Preservation Commission
LPC-20-02270 - 418 West 20th Street - Chelsea Historic District
Presented by Lizette Chaparro**

Good morning Chair Carroll and Commissioners. My name is Lizette Chaparro and on behalf of Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, I would like to urge you to deny the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for 418 West 20th Street.

The building that is before you today is part of a row of seven buildings known as Cushman's Row, a set of uniform three-and-a-half story townhouses. The building currently contains 5,500 square feet, is proposed to be converted for single family use, and yet the applicant is proposing an entire gut renovation and rear yard extension. The proposed extension would be significantly larger than the additions made to the other buildings on Cushman's Row, despite the fact that those other buildings are similar in size. If this application is approved by the Commission, all that will be left of the original building will be the façade and a portion of the roof. To propose such a drastic alteration is an affront to the Chelsea Historic District.

The Borough President agrees with Community Board 4 and Save Chelsea that the scope of work proposed by the applicant threatens to undermine the architectural and historical integrity of this historic building. To the extent that the building has structural issues, these issues should be remediated in a manner that preserves this historic home. It's not impossible—plenty of applicants that come before the LPC are able to undertake significant structural repairs while preserving their building. Furthermore, the Borough President believes that even though the building is not subject to an interior designation, the complete alteration of the footprint of every floor except the fourth floor is a far cry from the original structure and should not be approved.

The Commission's decision will have broader implications. Cushman's Row is the core of the residences in the Chelsea Historic District. This section of the Chelsea Historic District is highly important and we cannot allow others to chip away at it. Allowing such an extensive alteration to this historic home could lead property owners and buyers across Manhattan to believe that they too can drastically alter the very buildings that are meant to be preserved. The Borough President cares deeply about maintaining the historic and contextual integrity of neighborhoods and therefore urges the Commission to reject the applicant's proposed plans.

Thank you for your time and consideration.