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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

August 10, 2020

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

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

I write to request the immediate release of Fiscal Year 2020 Reso A funds to the School Construction Authority to enable them to immediately address the impending need for learning devices this fall 2020 term. While I can appreciate the burden of having to responsibly balance competing needs to the fiscal crisis caused by COVID 19, we must ensure that all students and teachers have the tools they need to maximize learning in a challenging environment.

The Department of Education's plan to offer blended learning, during which students learn in-person in school buildings for part of each week, and continue learning remotely from home on other days, requires that we immediately acquire and distribute learning devices for every student. The need for such learning devices may also increase if more parents opt for 100% remote learning, and there is a corresponding increase in the number of teachers requesting special accommodations to teach remotely. We know it takes six to eight weeks to get the equipment to the schools once the order has been placed. Therefore, we are already late in the process to make the devices available to every student on the first day of school.

For obvious reasons, more capital project spending is currently being directed to COVID 19 responses. We believe devices for remote learning should be included in the allowable capital purchases. I am working closely with Executive Superintendent Rosales and the School Construction Authority to identify the Manhattan schools in need of technology and repurposing of the Reso A funding I allocated over a year ago. My team is ready to support this effort.

We are all committed to provide students and teachers the tools they require. To that end, I have copied the Comptroller's Office to make them aware of our request, and to ensure that the students can borrow the learning devices.

Please contact Vanessa Díaz-López, Director of Budget & Capital Projects, at vdiaz-lopez@manhattanbp.nyc.gov or (347) 909-0366 with any questions. Thank you for your attention to this most important matter.

Sincerely,


Gale A. Brewer

cc: Hon. Scott Stringer, NYC Comptroller, 1 Centre Street, New York, NY 10007
Melanie Hartzog, Director, OMB, 255 Greenwich Street, New York, NY 10007
Paul Tymus, Assistant Director, OMB, 255 Greenwich Street, New York, NY 10007