

December 5, 2008

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

As Assemblymembers representing Manhattan, we write to you concerning the issue of impending senior center closures in our borough. We respectfully ask you to rethink a centralization plan that we believe is not attuned to the diverse needs of our constituents. We are concerned with the closing of senior centers throughout Manhattan in the name of “modernization.” We are particularly sensitive to the fear and anxiety this is causing thousands of seniors concerned about their senior center closing.

Manhattan seniors find themselves in the eye of a perfect storm. The housing crisis continues to squeeze residents in private buildings, and seniors in public housing have experienced both rent hikes and reduced maintenance. Meanwhile, the cost of living continues to rise. A recent City Planning report showed a lack of access to healthy and affordable food in supermarkets in communities with low-income senior populations. The 2030 plan projects a 44% increase in the older adult population in NYC by 2030 and calls for more senior centers.

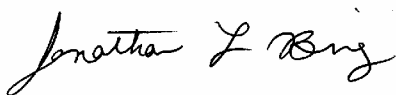
The senior centers in our borough are on the front lines of this crisis, helping to provide nutritional meals to seniors, as well as essential social services, transportation, health and wellness programs and other services. The dangers of isolation are real and governmental policy must recognize the implications of economic downturn on a constituency that continues to grow older and poorer.

The cuts to the Department for the Aging go right to the heart of a service system built over decades. The Department for the Aging (DFTA) has been hit with \$12.6 million in cuts. An additional \$4 million cut for this fiscal year will fully eliminate elder abuse prevention services, social adult day care for people with Alzheimer’s, intergenerational programs helping youth at-risk of dropping out of school, and social services such as assisting seniors with information on benefits, eviction prevention, and escorting them to do food shopping and other tasks. Support services for caregivers caring for elderly parents or their spouse is being cut by about one-third as the city pulls out all its funds. Insufficient funding also puts in jeopardy the many Manhattan senior centers located in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) facilities.

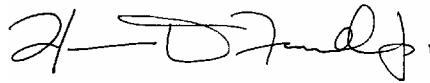
The recently released senior center RFP “Congregate Programs for Older Adults,” could result in the closing of upwards of eighty-five senior centers across the city from the present 329. Centralizing services in a few large senior centers, known as hubs, while bringing in laudable health related services, will largely serve seniors who live nearby. Closing local, neighborhood senior centers will deprive seniors of access as they are unlikely to travel any greater distance to attend a senior center. Older New Yorkers are a diverse population and need to feel comfortable attending a senior center that meets their cultural needs. This will result in more isolation as they lose important relationships and resources. Seniors are growing poorer during this economic crisis and some senior centers are reporting an increase in the elderly turning to the senior centers for meals to stretch their limited food budget. When we speak of the elderly, please remember they are disproportionately women. For many societal reasons, these elderly women have fewer resources in old age.

A one size fits all approach to seniors may not meet the particular needs of each Manhattan community. New models of senior centers should be tried on a demonstration basis first to see what seniors want and what works. We would like to work with you to reform senior centers in a way that is cognizant of how New York City seniors live their lives in the neighborhoods they’ve resided in for years. For all of these reasons, we respectfully ask you to not move forward with the senior center RFP.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Bing  
Assemblymember



Herman D. Farrell, Jr.  
Assemblymember



Deborah J. Glick  
Assemblymember



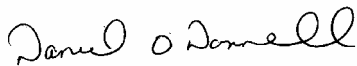
Richard Gottfried  
Assemblymember



Brian Kavanagh  
Assemblymember



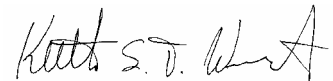
Micah Z. Kellner  
Assemblymember



Daniel O'Donnell  
Assemblymember



Linda Rosenthal  
Assemblymember



Keith Wright  
Assemblymember

cc: Edwin Méndez-Santiago, DFTA Commissioner

December 1, 2008

Dear Colleague,

Following for your consideration is a draft sign on letter to Mayor Bloomberg regarding the Department for the Aging's RFP for Congregate Programs for Older Adults. I share the Council of Senior Centers & Services' concern that this RFP, which is ostensibly aimed at modernizing the city's network of senior services, will result in the closing of senior centers throughout Manhattan.

I hope you will join me and our Manhattan Assembly colleagues in urging the City and the Department for the Aging (DFTA) to rethink its modernization proposal to ensure that DFTA does not leave behind the very individuals it is charged with serving.

If you would like to sign on to this letter or have any questions, please contact Molly Bidol in my office at 212-674-5153 by **Thursday, December 4<sup>th</sup>**. I look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah J. Glick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Deborah J. Glick  
Assemblymember