June 15, 2020

Dear Mayor de Blasio,

Mayor de Blasio, first, thank you for your recently announced support of increased funding for “youth development and social services for communities of color.” As organizations representing older New Yorkers and aging services providers, and in these final weeks of budget negotiations, we are writing about the urgent funding that is needed to support older adults. Aging services receive less than one half of one percent of the overall City budget, and many programs have been underfunded for years. While strides have been made, largely due to efforts by the City Council, the budget for the Department for the Aging (DFTA) remains critically under-resourced, especially in contrast to the rapidly increasing older adult population.

Today, as COVID-19 remains a threat and systemic racism is further brought to light, the importance of this funding is only heightened. We urge the City to include $10 million in senior center funding promises; $26.2 million for home-delivered meals supports; and a full restoration of all other programmatic funding for older adults in the FY 2021 City Budget.

As you move forward with budget deliberations, please consider that seniors are most at risk to COVID-19; many have died, and many more remain fearful, sheltering in place, isolated from loved ones and peers, and connected only to their local community-based organizations. Aging services providers have been on the frontlines of their communities providing older people with food, financial benefits, mental health support, and virtual activities to reduce social isolation. Older New Yorkers are most at-risk to COVID-19; the City must commit that their funding for services will not be at risk, too. From annual programmatic funding to one-year Administration adds to the entirety of the Council’s senior service discretionary funds — all should be prioritized and spared from the cutting room floor of the virtual negotiating table.

Further, we recognize that COVID-19 has not affected our communities equally. Systemic discrimination has ensured disproportionate impacts, namely deaths and infections, in the black and brown communities that many of our organizations work to serve. COVID-19 is not the only area where racial disparities run rampant; they are prevalent across many of our institutions. In contrast, our community rooted organizations are key components to countervailing the forces of racism, as well as sexism, ageism, and the many forms of discrimination that still exist. To this end, full funding for human and senior service organizations is necessary to promote resiliency and equity in our neighborhoods, among our predominantly female and minority workforce, and for the older adults we serve.

Despite the budget challenges, we believe it is possible for the City to enact a budget that reflects the values that have become resoundingly clear from New Yorkers. This means increased funding for human services — including not only senior services, but youth services, housing supports and more — and truly investing in our communities.

Respectfully,

LiveOn NY
AARP New York
Acacia Network
Age Friendly Bedford Stuyvesant and Crown Heights
Allen Community Senior Citizens Center
Alzheimer’s Association
ARC XVI Ft. Washington, Inc.
Ascendant Neighborhood Development Corporation
Bay Ridge Center
Bethany HDFC
Bronx House
Brooklyn Chinese-American Association
CaringKind
Carter Burden Network
Center for Adults Living Well @ the Y: YM/YWHA of Washington Heights & Inwood
Center for an Urban Future (CUF)
Community Agency for Senior Citizens, Inc. (CASC)
Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc.
Citymeals on Wheels
Concerts in Motion
Cooper Square Committee
Corona Congregational Church
DOROT
East Side House Settlement
Educational Alliance
Elmcor Youth & Adult Activities
Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.
Emerald Isle Immigration Center
Encore Community Services
Family Health Centers at NYU Langone
Fenimore Senior Citizen Center INC
Florence E. Smith Senior Services
Fordham Bedford Community Services
FPWA
Gray Panthers NYC
Greenwich House
Goddard Riverside
Guardianship Project at the Vera Institute of Justice
Hartley House
Hamilton-Madison House
HANAC, Inc.
Heights and Hills
Henry Street Settlement
Hope of Israel Senior Citizens Center
Hudson Guild
Human Services Council
India Home inc
Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement
James Lenox House and Carnegie East House
Japanese American Social Services, Inc.
JASA
Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island
Lenox Hill Neighborhood House
Lifetime Arts
Mark Morris Dance Group (Discalced, Inc.)
Meals on Wheels of Staten Island
Medicare Rights Center
Mid Bronx Senior Citizens Council, Inc.
Morningside Retirement and Health Services
Neighborhood SHOPP
New York Irish Center
New York State Alliance for Retired Americans and our NYC chapter
NY Caring Majority
OATS
Osborne Association
Penn South Social Services
Polish and Slavic Center
Project FIND
PSS (Presbyterian Senior Services)
Regional Aid for Interim Needs, Inc.
Recreation Rooms and Settlement Inc.
RiseBoro Community Partnership, Inc.
RiverSpring Health
Riverstone Senior Life Services
Rochdale Village Senior Center
RSS Riverdale Senior Services
SAGE
Samuel Field Y dba Commonpoint Queens
Selfhelp Community Services, Inc.
Senior Citizens League of Flatbush
Service Program for Older People, Inc. (SPOP)
Services Now for Adult Persons, Inc. (SNAP)
Shorefront YM-YWHA of Brighton-Manhattan Beach, Inc.
Sister Annunciata Bethell NSC
Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation
Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center
Stonewall Community Development Corporation
Strycker’s Bay Neighborhood Council
Sunnyside Community Services
The Brookdale Center on Healthy Aging
The DOME Project
The New York Academy of Medicine
UJA-Federation of New York
Union Settlement
United Jewish Council Adult Luncheon Club
United Neighborhood Houses
University Settlement
Vision Urbana, Inc.
VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Visiting Neighbors, Inc.
Volunteers of Legal Service - Elderly Project
Wayside Out Reach Development
Weill Cornell Medicine's NYC Elder Abuse Center
WEST SIDE FEDERATION FOR SENIOR AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING, INC
Young Israel Programs, Inc.

Cc: Speaker Corey Johnson and New York City Council