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**DEPUTY MAYOR GIBBS, SPEAKER QUINN, COMMISSIONER MENDEZ-SANTIAGO
AND COALITION OF HUMAN SERVICE UMBRELLA GROUPS ANNOUNCE BROAD
AGREEMENT ON SENIOR SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS**

Agreement includes delay of senior center RFP, phasing- in of ambitious service reforms, and technical assistance to support providers in transition effort

Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs, City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn, Department for the Aging Commissioner Edwin Mendez-Santiago and a large coalition of human service umbrella groups that represent senior service providers today announced three significant changes in the City's plan to strengthen and enhance senior services. The agreement includes a delay in the Senior Center RFP, the phasing-in of senior center reforms and a proposal for technical assistance to providers in need of support during the transition period. The agreement announced today is the result of an extensive dialogue with seniors, the City Council including Chair of the Aging Committee Maria del Carmen Arroyo and Chair of the Sub-committee on Senior Centers James Vacca as well as the umbrella organizations that represent providers. Organizations include United Neighborhood Houses Executive Director Nancy Wackstein, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies Executive Director Fatima Goldman, UJA Federation of New York Vice President Ron Soloway, Human Services Council Executive Director Michael Stoller, and representatives of the philanthropic community including President and CEO of the United Way of New York City Gordon Campbell, and Senior Vice President of The New York Community Trust Joyce Bove.

"This agreement marks the right step, at the right time, with the right support to make these enhancements a success," said Deputy Mayor Gibbs. "Over the course of the past year and a half we have spoken to seniors, consulted our community partners, and conferred with our colleagues in the City Council to develop the most comprehensive vision and plan for the modernization of aging services."

"I am pleased that the Department for the Aging has agreed to change the schedule of their RFP process," said Speaker Quinn. "While certain details of the proposal still need to be fleshed out, I believe today's announcement is truly a significant step in the right direction. This phased reform process recognizes the importance of community-based providers and ensures services that meet the diverse needs of New York City's senior community. We look forward to working with DFTA, service providers and stakeholders to ensure that changes are implemented in such a way that no one loses services they depend on."

(more)

To prepare for a growing senior population, the City has worked closely with senior service providers, advocate organizations and elected officials to address their concerns and develop solutions based on their suggestions. Following an intensive series of discussions, the City has agreed to delay the Senior Center Request for Proposals (RFP) until September 2008 to allow for continued discussion and collaboration. The City has also agreed to phase in on a smaller scale the ambitious senior center model, including a full array of services and activities to appeal to a more diverse senior population, within a limited number of centers. All other centers will have enhanced health and wellness programs and will retain meal services as a core requirement. Lastly, a technical assistance program will be provided to prepare all organizations for the upcoming RFP process, supplemented by individualized support for small groups in need of additional proposal development assistance. A proposal is being submitted to the United Way of New York City and the New York Community Trust to develop a program that will support providers during the RFP and transition process.

“This announcement is good news for the City’s aging population. I thank the Mayor for acknowledging feedback from the community, from my office, and from others across this City who felt passionately about this fundamental restructuring,” said New York City Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr. “This postponement will allow the City to bring more people to the table and to develop a more thorough plan, consider additional partnerships, and reduce the burden on the community-based providers.”

“I want to acknowledge the City’s responsiveness to our concerns and delaying the issuing of the Senior Center RFP,” said Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz. “As someone who is quickly approaching his official senior years, I look forward to working closely with Mayor Bloomberg and Brooklyn senior centers and providers to enhance the delivery of services for our seniors,”

“We need to prepare for a growing senior population and we agree that reform to DFTA’s services is a critical part of those preparations,” said Councilmember Arroyo. “However, how we implement the changes necessary is of great importance to the seniors in our City. I want to thank Deputy Mayor Gibbs and Commissioner Mendez-Santiago for engaging in an inclusive planning process and hearing our concerns. I look forward to a continued dialogue.”

“For many of our elderly, their senior center is their second home, and it is crucial that we maintain that sense of community as we move forward,” said Councilmember Vacca. “Today’s agreement is a definite step in the right direction in that it recognizes that every existing center deserves an opportunity to participate in a modernization program and engage in collaboration to meet the needs of a growing senior population in the years ahead.”

“The Department for the Aging is committed to an ongoing and engaging dialogue that incorporates all facets of New York City’s aging network, including seniors, community partners and elected officials,” Commissioner Mendez-Santiago said. “This process began in December 2006 and will continue into the future to ensure that all voices are heard and we are working together to provide the best for seniors.”

“There are hundreds of outstanding community based service providers who run programs for our City’s older adults, said Nancy Wackstein, Chair of the Human Services Council of New York City. “Many have created culturally diverse and innovative services such as exercise and nutrition programs, geriatric mental health services, caregiver support, and arts and continuing education that promote lifelong learning. These provide a strong model to build on and we look forward to partnering with the City to expand these quality services. We urge that the Mayor and the City Council ensure sufficient funding is in place to support these priorities.”

“We are happy to partner with the City in this ongoing dialogue about how to ensure providers of all sizes are equipped to respond to the City’s RFP and meet the needs of our growing senior population,” said Gordon J. Campbell, President & CEO, United Way of New York City.

The Home Delivered Meals RFP will be released on May 1 to allow awards to be made before the Senior Center RFP is released, allowing providers more time between reforms. Enhancements to the meal program will provide greater efficiency, flexibility and choice to frail homebound seniors while providing them with healthy and specialized dietary meals. Seniors will benefit from telephone reassurance, friendly visiting and other community supports to make certain that they are safe and secure in their homes. In addition, the three month transition of case management services currently underway will be closely monitored to best ensure a smooth transition of providers.

The City’s modernization of aging services is a far-reaching effort to strengthen and improve the services seniors receive today and to prepare for the growing and diverse needs of tomorrow’s seniors. Enhancements made to services provided for seniors will result in more seniors being served, providing more options without a loss of services to seniors. The City will continue to work daily with providers to answer questions, resolve concerns and ensure transparency in its efforts to provide enhanced services for seniors.

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