The City of New York

Community Board 12 - Manhattan
Washington Heights & Inwood

530 West 166th St. 6th Floor, New York, NY 10032
Phone: (212) 568-8500, Fax: (212) 740-8197
Website: www.nyc.gov/mcb12

George Fernández Jr. - Chairman
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

June 8, 2015

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Hon. Melissa Mark-Viverito
Speaker – NYC Council
Legislative Office
250 Broadway - Room 1856
New York, NY 10007

Council Member Mark Levine
Legislative Office
250 Broadway - Room 1816
New York, NY 10007

Council Member Vanessa Gibson
Legislative Office
250 Broadway - Room 1770
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Mark-Viverito, Council Members Levine & Gibson:

At the General Meeting on Tuesday, May 26, 2015, Community Board 12, Manhattan passed the following resolution with a vote of (30) In Favor, (0) Opposed, (0) Abstain that supporting Office of Civil Justice headed by a Civil Justice Coordinator and City Council Bill Intro 736 itself so as to centralize, organize and oversee the distribution of a complex array of legal services, funding and programs in our courts and legal systems.

Whereas, On April, 2015 a public hearing was held by the NYC City Council Committee on Courts and Legal Services on Intro 736 -- a bill that calls for the establishment of an Office of Civil Justice; and

Whereas, The primary purpose of the bill introduced by Council Member Levine with City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito is to insure that there is a central administrative office that has the authority to effectively assess the entire spectrum of needs for civil legal services throughout the city; and

Whereas, Civil proceedings often cover life changing events, such as child custody, deportation and the loss of housing establishing an Office of Civil Justice, headed by a Civil Justice Coordinator appointed by the Mayor, would centralize efforts to understand, analyze and identify the legal representation needs of city residents and oversee the effectiveness of civil legal services funding and programs in the Human Resources Administration (now with a FY'15 $42 million dollar legal services budget), the Department of Homeless Services, the Offices of Immigrant Affairs and the Right to Counsel bill pending with Intro 214; and

Whereas, The Office of Civil Justice, modeled after the now successful Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, would coordinate with the Mayor and the City Council to develop a comprehensive strategy for expanding low cost or free legal services to low-income city residents given the significant funding increases for civil legal services across the City; and

Whereas, Intro 736 has the support of Gale Brewer (Manhattan Borough President), Commissioner Steven Banks (HRA), The Legal Aid Society, Legal Services/NYC, New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), NYC Bar Association, NY Lawyers for the Public interest, the Urban Justice Center, MFY Legal Services, and the growing support from others including more Council Members who have signed on; **now therefore be it**

Resolved, Community Board 12, Manhattan recommends the establishment of the Office of Civil Justice headed by a Civil Justice Coordinator and City Council Bill Intro 736 itself so as to centralize, organize and oversee the distribution of a complex array of legal services, funding and programs in our courts and legal systems.

Sincerely,

George Fernandez, Jr.
Chair - Community Board 12Manhattan

cc: Commissioner Darryl C. Towns – DHCR
Commissioner Steven Banks, Esq. – HRA/DSS
Commissioner Gilbert Taylor - DHS
Commissioner Gladys Carrión, Esq. -- ACS
Zachary W. Carter - Corporation Counsel – Law Dept.
Hon. Letitia A. James - Public Advocate
Hon. Gale A. Brewer - Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Scott M. Stringer – NYC Comptroller
Senator Adriano Espaillat
Senator Bill Perkins
Assembly Member Keith L.T. Wright
Assembly Member Herman D. Farrell, Jr
Assembly Member Guillermo Linares
Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez
Council Member Jumaane D. Williams
Council Member Ritchie Torres
Commissioner - Vicki Been - HPD