November 29, 2017

Hon. Kevin J. O'Toole  
Chairman  
The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey  
4 World Trade Center  
150 Greenwich Street  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairman O'Toole:

At our General Meeting on November 28, 2017, Community Board 12 - Manhattan passed the following resolution by a vote of 35-0-0 calling upon the Port Authority of NY/NJ to act again with urgency to install both temporary and permanent safety fencing on the George Washington Bridge to prevent the unfortunately large number of suicides from continuing to occur there and to fast track all construction projects so that they are completed much earlier than the anticipated 2026 end date.

The resolution was approved in response to your agency’s request to review and comment on the $3.4 billion FY2018 Capital Budget released for public review and comment that aligns with your previously published $32 billion 10-year, 2017-2026 Capital Plan and further invests in critical NYC regional transportation projects such as the “Restoring the George” project.

The resolution also calls upon the Port Authority to review the proposed design of the permanent safety fence, namely the continuous series of closely spaced 11-foot-high steel vertical bars to be constructed along the outer edges of the bridge walkways, to improve its aesthetic quality without delaying this project and requests that the revised plan be presented to this board for community review.

Whereas: Community Board 12-Manhattan has previously requested that the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey respond effectively and immediately to reduce the public health hazard of self-harm and lessen public safety concerns by installing physical barriers for suicide prevention at the George Washington Bridge (GWB); and

Whereas: Community Board 12-Manhattan at our General Meeting on December 20, 2016, unanimously passed a resolution calling upon the Port Authority to act with urgency to install safety fencing on the GWB to prevent the unfortunately large number of suicides from continuing to occur there; and

Whereas: The Port Authority recently released a proposed $3.4 billion FY 2018 Capital Budget for public review and comment that aligns with its $32 billion 10-year, 2017-2026 Capital Plan and further invests in critical NYC regional transportation projects such as the “Restoring the George” project; and

Whereas: This proposed FY 2018 budget includes a total of $113,778,000 for the design, planning and construction of several GWB projects, including but not limited to $703,000 for the Phase 1 installation of the pedestrian safety fencing, $98,554,000 for the overall “Restoring the George” rehabilitation program and
$1,135,000 for the Phase 1 rehabilitation of Trans Manhattan Expressway, which needs to be coordinated with the NYC Department of Transportation; and

Whereas: The Port Authority recently made a presentation to the Community Board concerning these projects and reported that temporary safety fencing is finally being installed on the walkway on the south side of the GWB; and

Whereas: A man was still able to jump off the bridge on November 8, the 13th such suicide this year, tragically adding to an estimated 1,200 suicides that have occurred over the 86-year history of the bridge and reinforcing the pressing need for the safety fencing; now, therefore, be it

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan once again calls upon the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to act with the urgency that this situation demands and complete the installation of the temporary and permanent safety fencing on an expedited basis in order to save as many lives as possible; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan calls upon the Port Authority to review the proposed design of the permanent safety fence, namely the continuous series of closely spaced 11-foot-high steel vertical bars to be constructed along the outer edges of the bridge walkways, to improve its aesthetic quality without delaying this project; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan requests that the revised plan be presented to this board for community review; and finally be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan urges that the “Restoring the George” and its associated projects, especially the installation of the safety fencing, be fast tracked to shorten significantly the timetable so that they are completed much earlier than the anticipated 2026 end date.

We look forward to your favorable consideration of this resolution and given the urgency we would appreciate from you shortly.

Sincerely,

Shanabuddien A. Ally, Esq.
Chairperson

cc: Hon. Andrew Cuomo, Governor
    Hon. Richard Cotton, Executive Director
    Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
    Hon. Letitia James, Public Advocate
    Hon. Scott Stringer, Comptroller
    Hon. Gale Brewer, Borough President
    Hon. Richard H. Bagger, Commissioner
    Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman
    Hon. Brian Benjamin, State Senator
    Hon. Marisol Alcantara, State Senator
    71st Assembly District Office
    Hon. Carmen de la Rosa, Assembly Member
    Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
    Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member
    Veronica G. Smith, Manager/Community Relations