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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: **All Staff**

FROM: **Borough President Donovan Richards Jr.**

DATE: **December 24, 2024**

RE: **Our EEO Commitment**

I am writing to let you know that the New York City Equal Employment Practices Commission recently concluded an audit of the Office of the Queens Borough President's sexual harassment prevention policies, a process that allowed us to review our equal employment opportunity ("EEO") practices and ensure that we are meeting our commitment to an equitable and respectful workplace that is free from discrimination and harassment. The audit did not result in any significant changes to our policies, but pursuant to the EEPC's recommendations, we will continue to (1) reiterate our commitment to preventing sexual harassment in the workplace on an annual basis, (2) implement our training plan that requires all staff members to receive sexual harassment prevention training annually, (3) ensure that our EEO Officers receive opportunities for continuing education and professional development, and (4) develop and submit an EEO Annual Plan each year to coordinate the annual implementation of our EEO program.

Please know that I am committed to our EEO program and the goal of preventing and appropriately responding to all forms of discrimination in our workplace.

Below, you'll find a summary of the QBPO EEO Policy, the full version of which is attached to this memorandum, and specific policies relating to sexual harassment. Please review these materials so that you are aware of your rights and obligations under the Policy. And if you have any questions, please reach out to our EEO Officer Lisa Atkins. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Donovan Richards Jr.
Queens Borough President

EEO and Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy Statement

The Office of the Queens Borough President (QBPO) is an equal opportunity employer, and QBPO leadership is committed to preventing illegal discrimination by ensuring that all employees are aware of their rights and obligations under the QBPO Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy, which includes our office's sexual harassment prevention policy.

The QBPO EEO Policy

The QBPO EEO Policy—which has been previously provided to you, is posted in Borough Hall, and is attached to this memo—prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion or creed, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, gender, age, alienage or citizenship, military status, prior record of arrest or conviction, marital/partnership status, caregiver status, consumer credit history, unemployment status, genetic predisposition or predisposing genetic characteristic, and status as a victim of or witness to domestic violence, a sex offense, or stalking. Please take a moment to review the Policy. Every QBPO employee—paid or unpaid, permanent or temporary, managerial or non-managerial—is protected by the QBPO EEO Policy and by federal, state, and local anti-discrimination laws. Those who seek to work for the City are also protected from discrimination.

If you have any questions regarding the QBPO EEO Policy, please reach out to our EEO Officer:

Lisa Atkins
Room 226
(718) 286-2860
liatkins@queensbp.nyc.gov

What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is a form of employment discrimination prohibited by the QBPO EEO Policy and applicable law. All QBPO employees should be familiar with the protections against sexual harassment contained in the QBPO EEO Policy, which incorporates the protections provided by federal, state, and local laws and implement them by providing for disciplinary sanctions to be imposed on employees who engage in sexual harassment.

Federal guidelines define sexual harassment as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature . . . when: 1) submission to the conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; 2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or 3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment." Under the New York City Human Rights Law, verbal or physical conduct that treats a person "less well" because of gender is unlawful.

Sexual harassment may involve individuals of the same or different genders. A broad range of conduct by supervisors and co-workers may constitute sexual harassment, including, but not

limited to: making remarks or gestures or displaying pictures that are sexually suggestive; engaging in verbal banter, abuse, or harassment of a sexual nature; requesting—directly or subtly—sexual favors; and subjecting another person to unwelcome touching, patting, pinching, or other contact.

Strict Prohibition of Sexual Harassment

QBPO strictly prohibits employees from engaging in any form of sexual harassment. QBPO employees who violate this policy are subject to discipline, including termination. Persons who violate this policy may also be subject to civil damages or criminal penalties.

The policies prohibiting sexual harassment do not forbid consensual social relationships between employees. But they do prohibit gender-based conduct that is unwanted or creates an intimidating and hostile work environment.

How to Report Sexual Harassment

The Queens Borough President's Office urges anyone who believes he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment or any unwelcome sexual attention to report the conduct to a supervisor or manager or to our EEO Officer. It is important to report all concerns about sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual conduct to the EEO Officer or a supervisor or manager as soon as possible.

Managers, supervisors, and human resources personnel must promptly notify our office's EEO Officer in writing, either via e-mail or memorandum, if they receive a complaint alleging sexual harassment or if they observe, learn about, or suspect that any violation of the EEO Policy has occurred. Managers and supervisors should also encourage subordinates to consult with the EEO Officer.

Complaints of sexual harassment will be handled pursuant to the QBPO EEO Policy. All inquiries, complaints, and investigations are treated confidentially. Information is revealed strictly on a need-to-know basis. Information contained in a formal complaint is kept as confidential as possible.

No employee may retaliate against or harass any person for filing a complaint or cooperating in the investigation of the complaint. Retaliation or harassment is unlawful and subject to disciplinary action.