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Morry Galonoy
Chairperson

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April 13, 2022

Honorable Eric Adams, Mayor of the City of New York
Honorable Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate
Honorable Brad Lander, City Comptroller
Honorable Adrienne E. Adams, Speaker of the NYC Council
Honorable Donovan Richards, Queens Borough President
Honorable Robert Holden, Chair of the NYC Council Veterans Committee
Honorable Julie Won, NYC Council Member, District 26

RE: **Community Board 2 Queens Shelters**

Community Board 2 is writing to implore your attention to our concerns for the welfare of our sheltered population housed within Community Board 2 Queens, and call upon each of you to act on our concerns.

At the April 7, 2022 meeting of Community Board 2 Queens, a motion was made and seconded that CB2 write a letter to the elected officials concerning the welfare of our sheltered residents in our district and call upon each to act on our concerns. At that meeting with a quorum present, the board voted unanimously with none opposed and no abstentions to submit the letter below for consideration.

On March 10th during the NYC Council Stated Meeting and Press Conference Speaker Adams acknowledged that the conditions of our shelters are sub-par, this is an issue the council should address with urgency, including potential oversight hearings. We concur with Speaker Adams and cite examples of the unacceptable conditions and management of our shelters in Community Board 2 Queens that require immediate correction. We believe that it is understandable why many homeless do not seek shelter in NYC's shelters, due to examples cited below involving safety, security, conflict and abuse. We need comprehensive action to be taken.

Today we focus on a cluster of shelters all within a mile of each other in the hamlet of Blissville, Long Island City – located within the boundaries of Community Board 2 Queens. In March of 2018 representatives from the City of New York stood in front of the Blissville community making many promises before establishing 3 shelters in this isolated community (North Star Shelter, Home Suites Shelter, City View Shelter) in addition to the existing Borden Avenue Veterans Shelter. The New York City Administration, Department of Homeless Services and the Provider have failed to live up to these promises inclusive of commitments to invest in the community of Blissville for infrastructure improvements, Greenspace, parks and playgrounds.

Specific issues at each of the three existing shelters in Blissville are as follows:

City View Hotel

In the fall of 2021 DHS reported this hotel was no longer being used as a shelter; after being used as a temporary shelter for 4 years; during which time the community had no access to the shelter - as the provider refused to meet with the community, stating there was no requirement to meet with the community because it was a temporary shelter. We recently learned however, that DHS' statement to the community is untrue and the hotel is still used as a shelter. We learned of this following a fire at the hotel on March 9, 2022 that injured 8 at the hands of an arsonist – all DHS Clients. Who is caring for our most vulnerable. If the agency charged with the care of our homeless does not acknowledge where their clients are being placed?

- CB 2 is requesting that the New York City Council introduce legislation requiring that all shelters (temporary or permanent) require the over-sight of a Community Advisory Board. A shelter operating for 4 years is NOT temporary.
- CB 2 is requesting that the office of the City of New York and the Public Advocate conduct a full investigation into the arson that occurred at this shelter and any failures of DHS to ensure the safety and care of our sheltered as well as the failure of DHS to speak truthfully to the community regarding this hotel being used as a shelter.

North Star Shelter

The community advisory board (CAB) meeting for this shelter has deteriorated over the last 4 years and become increasingly less organized, resulting in CAB meetings which have become an afterthought of the agency and provider. The Blissville community that hosts the North Star Shelter is experiencing higher levels of violations of the good neighbor policy and we question why the provider, Home Life Services Inc needed to take a 2.6-million-dollar payroll protection loan in 2020. Why would the provider need a loan for payroll when they have a contract with the city of New York. Did they city not pay the provider? Why did the provider need the loan, has it been paid back? Where did the money go?

- CB 2 is requesting that the City Comptroller investigate the 2.6-million-dollar loan taken by the provider, Home Life Services Inc. Why was it needed? Where did the money go?
- CB 2 is requesting that the Mayor's Office follow-up with DHS and the Provider, Home Life Services Inc. regarding the deterioration of the Community Advisory Board Meeting at this Shelter and also follow-up with us as to who will replace Amanda Nasner, Queens Borough Director of DHS due to her recent resignation.

Borden Avenue Veterans Shelter

We have received complaints from a neighboring business and residents of the shelter involving drug use, violence and use of weapons. The Borden Avenue Veterans Shelter whose provider has failed to connect with the chair of the Community Advisory Board for this shelter since the residents returned in January 2022.

- CB 2 is grateful to Councilmember Holden, in his capacity of chair of the NYC Council Veterans Committee for responding to our earlier requests and his scheduled visit to this shelter.
- CB 2 is calling upon the Mayor's Office to follow-up with DHS and the provider of this shelter. Our Veterans deserve better and no one should place their safety at risk by going to a shelter.

In addition to these specific requests for each facility, CB 2 is requesting that the Mayor's Office follow through on the original promises to the community noted above. We are very much opposed to the proposed \$615 million cuts from budgetary items destined to serve our sheltered homeless. CB 2 urges the New York City Council to rally against these budget cuts to our most vulnerable population and specifically to the shelters in District 26. We must invest in our shelters so our sheltered population experiences the best care and we can encourage more homeless to utilize the shelter system rather than fearing it. These issues go beyond Blissville and Queens CB2, as unacceptable and dangerous shelter conditions lead to more unhoused individuals sheltering in subways and other public spaces throughout the city.

Finally, we request that the Mayor of the City of New York advise the Commissioner of the Department of Homeless Services to attend meeting of Community Board 2 Queens to answer questions from our Community Board 2 community.

Thank you for your attention and we look forward to hearing from you with regard to these concerns.

Sincerely,



Morry Galonoy
Chairperson, Community Board 2, Queens



Debra Markell Kleinert
District Manager, Community Board 2, Queens

cc: Honorable Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, US Congress
Honorable Carolyn B, Maloney, US Congress
Honorable Grace Meng, US Congress
Honorable Nydia M. Velazquez, US Congress
Honorable Michael Gianaris, NY State Senate
Honorable Brian Barnwell, NYS Assembly
Honorable Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, NYS Assembly
Honorable Catherine T. Nolan, NYS Assembly
Honorable Shekar Krishman, NYC Council Member
Fred Kreizman, Commissioner, Community Affairs Unit