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Councilman Gentile Applauds Restoration of Library Funding

CITY HALL—After months of leading the citywide opposition against proposed cuts to public library funding, Councilman Vincent Gentile celebrated yesterday evening’s restoration of that funding, calling it “proof of the city’s commitment to and support of local communities, employment and literacy in the coming year.”

Speaker Christine Quinn and Mayor Bloomberg agreed yesterday evening on a Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 budget that will avoid closure at 16 fire companies, maintain city-wide, six-day library service and keeping current staff levels for child welfare workers at the Administration of Children’s Services (ACS). The restoration will also preserve 31 classrooms at ACS childcare centers.

Councilman Vincent Gentile, as Chair of the Subcommittee on Libraries, helped to secure six-day service in the city’s libraries in 2007. This year, he led the opposition to preserve six-day service, jobs and hours in the Brooklyn, New York and Queens public library systems, gathering more than 8,000 signatures in person and online from residents opposed to the proposed \$46.5 million budget reduction.

Councilman Gentile also gathered support from 13 other Council Members who signed onto a June 2, 2009 letter to Mayor Bloomberg, urging that funding be restored in its entirety.

Additionally, Councilman Gentile conducted an informal study, duplicating one conducted by the Center for an Urban Future in 2007, demonstrating that the hours libraries are open to the public in New York City are already lower than 20 major cities in the United States. Reducing those hours any further, Councilman Gentile argued, would put New Yorkers at a cultural and educational disadvantage.

“Local branches buoy employment and literacy rates and promote community involvement,” Councilman Gentile said. “In the face of harmful cuts to libraries, New Yorkers rallied and fought for the valuable resources libraries make available to everyone, no matter neighborhood, income or age.

“Speaker Quinn’s preservation of library funding speaks to her commitment to getting local communities through tough times in one piece, and having them emerge ready to become stronger than before,” Councilman Gentile added.