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September 29, 2023

Public Comment before the Federal Aviation Administration on Civil Aviation Noise Policy

My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the New York City Council Member for District 6, representing most of the Upper West Side, part of Clinton and all of Central Park in Manhattan. I commend the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for seeking public input on this pressing issue and for recognizing the importance of considering individuals' lived experiences.

The relentless noise caused by helicopters in my district has reached an intolerable level, impacting the daily lives and well-being of residents and visitors alike. In 2022, the city's 311 system registered nearly 18,000 helicopter-related noise complaints from Manhattan. One third of them were from the Upper West Side.

Oppressive noise from non-essential helicopter flights ruins outdoor events, enjoyment of green space, and peace at home. I received a call from an older adult who lives in a small Upper West Side apartment who complained about the incessant helicopter noise. On good-weather days, she has to close her windows and turn on the air conditioner to escape the constant buzz of choppers overhead and nearby. She only finds relief when it rains.

The following excerpts of complaints submitted to my office further illustrates the problem:

- *I hate what's happening with all the helicopters and the noise pollution. It's an assault on whatever peace we can grab in our beloved city. Sitting peacefully in Central Park is impossible. You can hear the constant whirr of the blades which causes anxiety and fear.*
- *My job is fully remote, but the helicopter noise is so unbearable that I cannot work in my home.*
- *There are noisy helicopters circling over my apartment for much of the day. Who is operating these helicopters? Can anything be done about them? It seems to be getting worse and is very distracting.*
- *I live near the Hudson River heliport. I used to sit at Chelsea Piers on Saturdays or Sundays. I do not anymore because the helicopter noise is incessant.*
- *The constant disturbance from helicopter flights disrupts my daily routines and interferes with my sleep patterns. The ongoing noise pollution is endangering my physical and mental health.*

The city is limited in its ability to regulate its own airspace; its authority is superseded by the FAA. The FAA has a history of trying to mitigate aircraft noise in populated areas; planes on approach to Reagan National Airport are routed over the Potomac River. Dense areas such as New York City ought to be given similar consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.