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December 17, 2024

Director Jacques Jiha
 Office of Management and Budget
 255 Greenwich Street, 8th Floor
 New York, NY 10007

Dear Director Jiha:

It is my understanding that a \$7.98 million budget enhancement for Department of Homeless Services (DHS) contracted street homeless outreach will expire on Dec. 31, 2024, halfway through the current budget year. The “hotspot funding” for Street Homeless Solutions (SHS) outreach providers, which was added to the budget in 2019 and renewed each of the past five years, is essential to connect unsheltered homeless to psychiatric, medical, and shelter services.

Mayor Adams held his 35th Community Conversation on Public Safety last night at Goddard Riverside, a non-profit that employs outreach workers with this hotspot funding. He asked DHS Commissioner Molly Park to address public safety concerns related to unhoused homeless individuals, particularly those with mental illness. She said: “DHS, together with our not-for-profit partners, including Goddard Riverside, have 400 street outreach workers out 24/7. I think that might be the hardest job in New York City... You’re talking with people who have fallen through every crack that there is to fall through. They have really been dropped by every level or society.”

It seems OMB has created one more crack for unhoused individuals to fall through. SHS providers in Manhattan employ 143 of the 400 street outreach workers citywide. They stand to lose \$2.7 million in hotspot funding, which would eliminate 35 outreach workers in the borough. Cutting funding now will force providers to reduce the number of outreach workers midwinter, diminishing their ability to engage and bring people indoors when sleeping outside can result in death.

Hotspot funding has led to meaningful gains in housing placements each of the last five years. Losing it means fewer staff to canvass the streets and respond to 311 requests in a timely manner in high needs areas such as 34th Street, 125th Street, as well as subway stations of concern. It means diminished ability to identify, monitor, and transport individuals who are experiencing symptoms of mental illness to hospitals. How can the Administration make good on its promises to get people with mental illness off the streets while eliminating the workers who bring them inside?

I urge you to renew this necessary funding. Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Gale A. Brewer

cc: Hon. Mayor Eric Adams
 First Deputy Mayor Maria Torres-Springer
 Commissioner Molly Park, NYC Department of Homeless Services