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September 30, 2024

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

Dear Director Jiha:

I write regarding budgetary decisions for oversight. It is my opinion that current funding levels are not enough for the Department of Investigation (DOI) and other oversight offices to adequately maintain integrity in municipal operations and ensure public money is spent lawfully. The Administration's spending on oversight reflects its commitment to good government.

DOI's budget increased 20% during Mayor de Blasio's second term, from \$43.9 million in FY 2018 to \$52.8 million in FY 2021, a total of \$8.9 million.¹ Mayor Adams entered office midway through FY 2021 and proposed a \$53.2 million DOI budget for FY 2022, a \$400,000 increase. Since then, the agency's budget has grown by approximately \$600,000, or 1%, to the FY 2025 adopted budget amount of \$53.8 million. Under Mayor de Blasio, DOI's headcount decreased from 397 in FY 2018 to 370 in FY 2021 (27 positions or 6.8%). The decrease under Mayor Adams has been more substantial. The FY 2025 adopted budgeted headcount is 283, a reduction of 87 positions, or 24%.² When I was first elected to the City Council in 2002, DOI's budgeted headcount was 327.³

It is not unexpected to see more, and more serious, wrongdoing when oversight resources flatten or shrink. DOI Commissioner Jocelyn Strauber testified before my committee on March 15, 2022 that she "cannot emphasize enough the deep impact that the loss of staffing has on the agency's ability to fully meet its mandate."⁴ On March 7, 2023, she testified that cuts have "an undeniable impact" on DOI's ability to root out corruption and waste, "a particularly vital function in the current environment."⁵

You testified at the FY 2025 Executive Budget Hearing on May 22, 2024: "We have had many discussions with the Commissioner in terms of the agency, the structure of the agency, what are the needs of the agency, what is best for the agency. At this point in time, I've been working with her, I think she's been very satisfied. I don't know, it's from my perspective. We provided her the resources that she needs to do her job."⁶

¹ It is worth noting that Mayor de Blasio's budgetary decisions for DOI did not help him. In October 2021, the Department issued a [47-page report](#) that described the mayor using his NYPD security detail as a "concierge service" during presidential campaign trips in 2019. He ordered to repay \$319,794 and fined an additional \$155,000 (DOI is a revenue-generating agency).

² [DOI FY18 to FY28 Budget vs. Actual](#)

³ [Preliminary Budget - Oversight and Investigations 3/22/02](#)

⁴ [Committee on Oversight and Investigations, Preliminary Budget Hearing, 3/15/22](#)

⁵ [Committee on Oversight and Investigations, Preliminary Budget Hearing, 3/7/23](#)

⁶ [Committee on Finance, Executive Budget Hearing, 5/22/24](#)

I have another perspective. DOI requested 20 new headcount for FY 2025 and \$1.4 million for salary adjustments. The City Council endorsed the asks, stating in the FY 2025 Preliminary Budget Response that DOI “does not have adequate funding to fulfill its vital mission to fight corruption.”⁷ The priority asks were six investigative support staff, two IT staff, and \$60,000 for salary adjustments, totaling \$732,000. DOI informed me on June 3, 2024: “We simply do not have enough people to cover the amount of work that is necessary to support our ongoing investigations and criminal cases.” The need is so acute that DOI experiences significant disruptions when staff go on vacation. OMB rejected the new needs requests.

DOI is not the only watchdog with unmet needs. Special Commissioner of Investigation Anastasia Coleman, who oversees the New York City school system, testified before my committee on June 18, 2024 that the discrepancy between the operating budgets of her office and the entity it is charged with overseeing presents an insurmountable challenge. “The DOE currently enrolls nearly one million students at approximately 1,800 facilities; it employs approximately 140,000 people (about half of whom are teachers) and maintains a budget of more than \$39 billion. However, SCI operates on a slender budget of just over six million dollars per year, covering both PS and OTPS dollars. SCI’s budget has remained exactly the same since FY22: \$6,361,054.”⁸

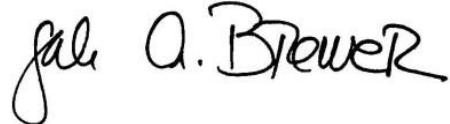
The DOI Annual Anti-Corruption Report⁹ for 2022 analyzed questionnaire responses from 64 agencies on how hiring freezes and budget cuts impact the City’s anti-corruption goals. Two-thirds of respondents reported that “understaffing had either some adverse impact on anti-corruption activities, such as reductions in oversight, auditing, and internal control functions, or presented risks to anti-corruption efforts as a result of delays, lowered capacity, inexperienced staff, and burnout.” Commissioner Strauber stated in a press release at the time: “These challenges, should they continue, could have a long-term negative impact on the City’s anti-corruption efforts and therefore could increase the risks of corruption, fraud, waste, and abuse.”¹⁰

For these reasons, I request the following changes in the November Plan:

1. Restoration of PEGs for DOI retroactive to FY 2022
2. Approval of new needs requests for oversight functions citywide retroactive to FY 2022
3. Exemptions from 2-for-1 hiring restrictions for oversight roles citywide
4. Funding for stand-alone training to support anti-corruption activities at agencies

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Gale A. Brewer

⁷ [New York City Council’s Response to the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Budget](#)

⁸ [Committee on Oversight and Investigation, Oversight – Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District, 6/18/24](#)

⁹ The Annual Anti-Corruption Report is mandated by [Executive Order 105](#)

¹⁰ [2022 Annual Anti-Corruption Report](#)