

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

may 28, 2020

Contact: Marian Guerra mguerra@council.nyc.gov

***CM CHIN CALLS ON CITY TO POSTPONE
HOME DELIVERED MEALS RFP***

***On top of inadequate funding and unrealistic deadline, providers have
now been told to stop enrolling new clients***

NEW YORK – Today, Council Member Margaret S. Chin released the following statement to renew her call to the Department for the Aging to postpone the Home Delivered Meals (HDM) Request for Proposals deadline, currently due this Monday, June 1, despite contracts not slated to begin until January 21, 2021:

"The Home Delivered Meals program has a strong track record of delivering reliable culturally-sensitive meals to homebound seniors while prioritizing community-based partnerships and incorporating case management into its delivery services. If we want to give food insecure seniors a fighting chance to survive this crisis, the City needs to support the providers who are tirelessly working to feed them, not stunt their capacity and growth. Due to underfunding, providers were already losing thousands of dollars to sustain this work before the pandemic. Now, not only are they forced to respond to an ill-timed and underfunded RFP that procures services that don't match the spike in demand we have been seeing, they are being asked to stop new enrollments entirely. That is unacceptable. The City needs to get this right and heed our call to delay the RFP until after this state of emergency ends."

With certain large HDM providers being directed to stop enrollments, potential HDM clients are now being referred to the Get Food NYC program, which does not have the same strict standards of nutrition and quality or includes regular wellness checks and case management services for the socially isolated.

On May 1, Council Member Chin led a letter, attached, signed on by a majority of Council Members to delay the HDM RFP application deadline and urge the City to increase funding to the program. DFTA has not yet issued a response.

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THE COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
MARGARET S. CHIN
COUNCIL MEMBER, 1ST DISTRICT, MANHATTAN

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YOUTH SERVICES
SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
IMMIGRATION

Lorraine A. Cortés-Vázquez
Commissioner, Department for the Aging
2 Lafayette Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10007

May 1, 2020

Dear Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez,

In light of COVID-19, we are writing to formally and urgently **request \$26.2 million in additional funding to support the City's home delivered meals (HDM) program** that has served and will continue to serve thousands of older New Yorkers across the five boroughs.

For years, the City's home delivered meals program has enabled a diverse coalition of community based organizations to meet the nutritional needs of homebound seniors and New Yorkers with disabilities in a systematic, compassionate, and culturally responsive way. Distinct from the City's recently launched "DFTA Direct" program that delivers food to people who previously were mobile and attended senior centers, HDM serves homebound older New Yorkers who are unable to prepare meals and experience limitations in activities of daily living, and includes a case management component and frequent wellness checks.

With COVID-19 protocols instructing the HDM to continue operating as usual, this program provides a powerful model for the types of community partnerships and attention to cultural preferences that now more than ever our City must support and expand.

As the COVID-19 pandemic intensifies and more seniors sheltering-at-home face food insecurity, the home delivered meals program has experienced an onslaught of new demand, concurrent with significant staffing challenges resulting from the spread of the disease. Programs initially reported increases of 20-30% since the start of March for HDM clients, and those numbers continue to grow as more older adults express need for food and social support, with some programs now expressing increases of approximately 50%.

DFTA's delay of the HDM RFP, with new contracts now slated to begin six months later than initially anticipated on January 1, 2021, was without question the right thing to do. We urge you to also extend the RFP application deadline, which is currently scheduled for May 20, 2020, given that this crisis has strained providers' ability to respond to the RFP by this date. The City must eliminate as many barriers as possible to allow burdened providers to respond to the RFP to the best of their abilities.

Given this, the City must immediately allocate funding to address the following distinct needs:

1. FY20 COVID-19 Related Increased Needs

a) \$8.5 million - Amend current HDM contracts to cover the remainder of FY 2020, representing the period of March-June 2020. This funding will cover an uptick in demand of approximately 20%, allocate incentive pay to frontline workers who are putting their lives at risk to serve older adults most at risk to the virus, and bring contracts up to DFTA's new RFP rate.

2. FY21 New Needs Exacerbated by COVID-19

- a) \$8.2 million - Support existing contract extensions in the first six months of FY 2021, from July-December 2020. This includes meeting a growth in demand stemming from COVID-19 new enrollees. Further, with new contracts delayed due to COVID-19, this funding will bring contract rates up to the national urban average cost of a home delivered meal, preventing providers from losing significant funding on their contracts.
- b) \$6.5 million - Support new contracts for the final six months of FY 2021, from January-June 2021. This assumes demand returns to pre-COVID-19 levels, and brings rates up to the national average cost of an urban meal.
- c) \$3 million - This is a long-standing funding need to increase support for weekend and holiday meals, to cover the entirety of FY 2021.

In total, this requires an emergency funding commitment of \$26.2 million. A first step towards reaching this amount could be to simply restore and baseline the \$2.84 million in one-time home-delivered meals funds currently left out of the Executive Budget, despite the increasing need.

The City must invest in the HDM program to ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic does not do further harm to our City's older adults than it already has — namely making insolvent the dedicated, essential, culturally-competent community-based providers that operate this program. This funding need is urgent. Without it, providers risk losing their dedicated workforce to dangerously low wages, community-based organizations risk insolvency due to insufficient reimbursement rates, and seniors risk losing access to nutritious meals as increased demand financially exhausts this already at-risk system. To meet this urgent and significant funding need, **we encourage you to utilize any available federal stimulus or FEMA funds to support this program, and to work with the State to prioritize HDM needs in localities most affected by COVID-19.**

Amidst a significant nationwide crisis, we thank you for your time and consideration of this funding request and the urgency required to support the home delivered meals system.

Sincerely,



Margaret S. Chin,
Council Member, District 1
Chair of the Committee on Aging



Peter Koo
Council Member, District 20



Daneek Miller
Council Member, District 27



Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Council Member, District 41



Mark Levine
Council Member, District 7



Diana Ayala
Council Member, District 8



Ben Kallos
Council Member, District 5



Alan Maisel
Council Member, District 46



Farah Louis
Council Member, District 45



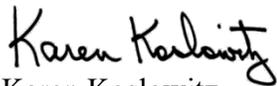
Paul Vallone
Council Member, District 19



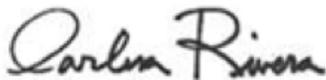
Danny Dromm
Council Member, District 25



Helen Rosenthal
Council Member, District 6



Karen Koslowitz
Council Member, District 29



Carlina Rivera
Council Member, District 2



Vanessa Gibson
Council Member, District 16



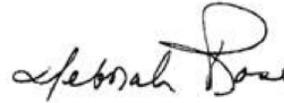
Andy King
Council Member, District 12



Andy Cohen
Council Member, District 11



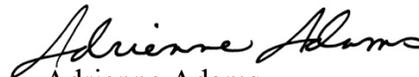
Justin Brannan
Council Member, District 43



Deborah Rose
Council Member, District 49



Mark Treyger
Council Member, District 47



Adrienne Adams
Council Member, District 28



Antonio Reynoso
Council Member, District 34



Costa Constaninides
Council Member, District 22



Robert Holden
Council Member, District 30



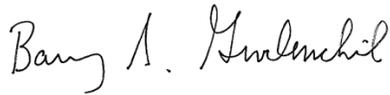
Francisco Moya
Council Member, District 21



Chaim Deutsch
Council Member, District 48



Brad Lander
Council Member, District 39



Barry Grodenchik
Council Member, District 23



Carlos Menchaca
Council Member, District 38



Rafael Salamanca
Council Member, District 17

cc: Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, New York City COVID-19 Food Czar