



DIANA C. RICHARDSON
Assemblywoman 43rd District

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February 27, 2017

Mayor Bill de Blasio
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Re: Proposed Shelter at 1173 Bergen Street

Dear Mayor Bill de Blasio:

I am writing you to express my sincere concern about the City's collaborative efforts with the community when introducing prospective homeless shelters particularly, 1173 Bergen Street, a site scheduled to open March 15, 2017, within the 43rd Assembly District.

As a community, we understand the level of apprehension that transparency on these initiatives may ensue, due to backlash received on prior occasions. Unfortunately, the Department of Homeless Services decision to hold a community informational meeting in regards to the 1173 Bergen Street shelter on Saturday, March 4, 2017 is not timely and does not provide for the necessary community input. The set date will not give community leaders and organizations substantial time to disseminate information on a project that has drawn mixed reactions from the outset. In addition, advancement of this project will ultimately provide housing for underserved individuals who require it, but it is imperative that community members are granted the right to information in an efficient manner, so that they can do their due diligence after receipt of such information.

The inadequate release of information surrounding this shelter dates back to the first week of August, during the summer of 2016, where I received several constituent calls expressing concern about rumored plans to transform 1173 Bergen Street into a shelter. My office reached out to the Department of Homeless Services to inquire about the status of this property, and was later informed that there would be no shelter at this site. Subsequently, I informed my constituents of such update.

On February 16, 2017, my office received a call from the Department of Homeless Services with updates informing them that the city would be in fact be moving forward with the shelter at the aforementioned location. During this time, we expressed that a 30 day notification was not enough time to inform the community. Unfortunately, in this case, the public will only get a few days to have this information communicated to them, leaving community residents on the ground feeling excluded and disrespected.

Moving forward, I request that you make the notification process a priority and tie in community inclusion when projects like this arise. In addition, it is well documented that although these shelter systems may come with their challenges, residential settings like this can address the needs of individuals who seek housing to propel themselves. It is common knowledge that shelters address issues of human dignity and privacy, and I myself once sought solace in the shelter system which had a positive impact on my ability to progress to the next phase of my life. The importance of this project is evident, but I would like to encourage you to put a stronger emphasis on time with projects of this nature moving forward.

Should you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to my office at (718) 771-3105. I appreciate your attention to this critical matter, and anticipate your immediate response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diana Richardson", with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Hon. Diana C. Richardson
Member of the New York State Assembly
43rd District, Kings County

CC: Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, 9th District
Senator Velmanette Montgomery, 25th District
Councilman Robert Cornegy, 36th District
Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, Steven Banks
Brooklyn Community Board 8