



COMPTROLLER OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
1 CENTRE STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10007-2341
(212) 669-3500

WILLIAM C. THOMPSON, JR.
COMPTROLLER

December 4, 2008

Edwin Mendez-Santiago
Commissioner
New York City Department for the Aging
2 Lafayette Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Commissioner Mendez-Santiago:

I write to express my concern about the Department for the Aging's (DFTA) Request for Proposal (RFP) for Congregate Programs for Older Adults (PIN: 125 10 SC1 0000), released on November 3, 2008. The RFP envisions sweeping changes to the City's current senior center system while leaving many significant questions about the redesign unanswered. I am especially disappointed that many of these unresolved issues are the same ones that DFTA was asked to address repeatedly throughout the last year.

While I applaud DFTA's increased emphasis on healthy aging, the RFP imposes a centralized, highly structured program design without regard to existing capacity or neighborhood needs. By imposing a rigid approach to modernization, the implementation of the program described in the RFP risks alienating and isolating seniors who depend on their local center as an essential lifeline. This is especially true given that DFTA itself projects that as many as 89 centers may be forced to close.

Moreover, it is unclear whether the funding for this new approach is adequate, stable and allocated on a rational, equitable basis. Using DFTA's ranges for the projected number of neighborhood centers and Senior Hubs it expects to award, if proposers bid at the maximum allowable budgets, \$500,000 and \$1,000,000 respectively, the available funding would cover between 209 and 239 centers; there are currently 329 centers operating. Senior advocates believe that the requirements for expanded services in the RFP will make it necessary to bid at or near the maximums.

Commissioner Edwin Mendez-Santiago

December 4, 2008

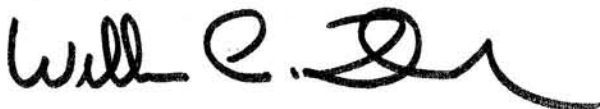
Page 2

Furthermore, the RFP places available funding at \$117 million, up from the \$94 million originally projected by DFTA. However, it has been reported that the additional funds represent City Council and Borough President allocations that have been redirected from their original purpose. I am concerned that upwards of \$20 million in funding for these contracts may not be available on a consistent basis or intended for use in this manner. Moreover, the method for determining and distributing each region's total budget is unclear, making it impossible to assess whether the funds meet area needs.

I am especially concerned about DFTA's ability to ensure a smooth roll-out of any new program. When DFTA announced its intention to replace its daily hot Meals-on-Wheels program with a semi-weekly frozen meal delivery, I, and many others, raised questions about the plan. To your credit, this led to a rethinking of several aspects, including making participation totally voluntary. While I still have reservations about the frozen meals program, by starting out in one borough only, the agency was able to fine-tune its approach.

If the questions raised in the attached document cannot be addressed thoroughly and in an adequate time frame, I urge you to withdraw the RFP at this time and reissue it at a future date with appropriate modifications. For the sake of our seniors as well as the providers who serve them, it is essential that a meaningful dialogue focused on how to meet the needs of all seniors, younger and older, able-bodied and frail, precede any alteration to DFTA programming.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will C. Thompson, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

William C. Thompson, Jr.