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THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
VINCENT J. GENTILE
COUNCIL MEMBER, 43RD DISTRICT
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CHAIR

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Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

June 2, 2009

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

We are writing to advocate for the survival of the Queens, Brooklyn and New York Public Library systems. More New Yorkers than ever before use their local libraries. This began with the institution of six-day service two years ago, but increased still further when our city fell upon hard economic times last year. Libraries provide affordable entertainment alternatives to movie theaters, bookstores and DVD rentals; they provide space for groups to organize and for neighbors to stay in touch. Council Members and community leaders take advantage of the public space provided by libraries to stay in touch with constituents on a regular basis. And thanks to libraries' job-hunting resources, professional-development courses and Internet access, libraries have become the go-to resource for residents seeking not just information but even employment.

Two years ago, the Center for an Urban Future ranked major U.S. cities' library systems according to branches' average weekly operating hours. We recently duplicated the study to see where New York City libraries will fall in the ranking if the proposed cuts are implemented; the results were shocking. Out of the 22 systems included in the original 2007 study, the Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn Public Library systems will be ranked 20th, 21st and 22nd, respectively – dead last.

While libraries in Memphis, for example, are open an average of 64 hours per week and Baltimore libraries are open approximately 36 hours per week, Queens branches will be open an average of just 27 hours each week, and Brooklyn will be open 25 hours per week at the most (down from 46 hours). New York Public Library branches, which include libraries in Staten Island and the Bronx, will be open an average of 32 hours per week (down from 52 hours).

Despite the far-reaching impact libraries have on every corner of this city, from Coney Island to Riverdale and from Hell's Kitchen to Bayside, it appears that you do not consider libraries to be a priority in this fiscal climate. We couldn't disagree more – our support of libraries and the preservation of their funding is more important to the vitality and future of New York City than ever. If we cut \$46.5 million from libraries' budgets, individuals will become isolated,

community groups will lose some of their impact and the unemployed will have to struggle harder to find work. We believe that advocating for employment, literacy and community involvement in the midst of a recession is the most important time to do so, and ask that you preserve the positive impact libraries have on local communities by abandoning the proposed cuts to their budgets.

Sincerely,



Vincent J. Gentile
Council Member, 43rd District
Brooklyn



Michael C. Nelson
Council Member, 48th District
Brooklyn



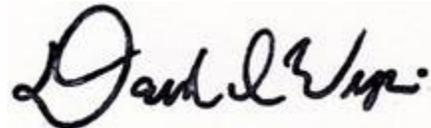
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Queens



Annabel Palma
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Bronx



James Vacca
Council Member, 13th District
Bronx



David I. Weprin
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Queens



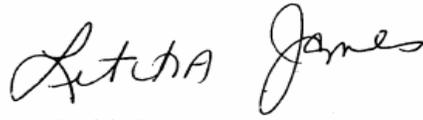
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Council Member, 10th District
Manhattan



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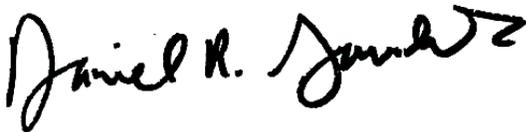
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