

August 3, 2020

Dear Council Member Rosenthal,

On behalf of over 3,500 mothers who are members of New Yorkers for Safer Streets (NYFSS), we are writing to express our deep concerns about the three new single men's homeless shelters that have been established in hotels on the Upper West Side in recent months. We are calling upon you to take immediate action, as outlined below, to protect the safety of your constituents.

Since the inception of NYFSS, we have advocated for safe and humane housing for homeless New Yorkers in addition to advocating for the overall safety of our neighborhoods. When we met with you last November, we raised our concerns about the lack of safety in and around Upper West Side homeless shelters, and expressed our outrage that the Department for Homeless Services (DHS), which is an NYC government agency, operates without transparency, accountability, or community engagement. DHS continues to operate with impunity, and the agency's recent actions in our neighborhood have put the safety of our families at risk more than ever.

Since late February, the number of single homeless men housed in neighborhood hotels in Manhattan Community Board 7 has increased to approximately 730: 447 according to the NYC homeless census dated June 30 plus the recent arrival of approximately 280 at the Hotel Lucerne. District 6 residents are reporting that residents of these hotel shelters are smoking marijuana and consuming hard drugs in public, and harassing and menacing residents on the streets around the hotels on a daily basis. Customers enjoying nearby outdoor dining have been subject to aggressive panhandling, further threatening the survival of already-fragile local restaurants and business.

Furthermore, we recently became aware of the presence of at least 18 level 2 and 3 sex offenders, the majority of whom have committed sexual crimes against children, residing in a hotel shelter that is just one and half blocks away from a PS 87 elementary school and Tecumseh playground. Neighbors were not alerted to the presence of these sex offenders, so many of your constituents remain uninformed about the real danger that has been introduced to our neighborhood. These developments in our

neighborhood are deeply troubling to say the least.

We are calling on you to address the rapid and alarming deterioration of safety in our neighborhood.

Specifically, we call on you to immediately:

1. Demand transparency from DHS and require that the agency share in advance its plans of sheltering large groups of homeless New Yorkers with local City Council representatives, the NYPD, and local community leaders, and provide local residents forums through which to offer feedback. Mayor de Blasio's Turning the Tide strategy includes a commitment to provide at least 30 days' notice to surrounding communities prior to opening a new shelter. Though these hotel-based shelters are technically "temporary," we believe the open-ended nature of their status means they should be handled with the same consideration afforded permanent shelters.
2. Ensure that no additional level 2 or level 3 sex offenders are transferred to shelters in Community Board 7 and fight to relocate immediately these 18 sex offenders into SARA compliant shelters away from schools, playgrounds, or near locations that provide services primarily to children.
3. Collaborate with DHS, the community board, and NYPD to develop an effective plan to maintain security inside shelters and to protect the safety and security of nearby residents. In the future, this should be done before a shelter is populated.
4. Since city-contracted shelter security firms don't have the authority to enforce public safety outside the shelter, work with NYPD ahead of any shelter introduction to ensure a plan is in place to address security in the surrounding area (and the resources needed to support said plan procured) before a shelter is populated.
5. Inform the public of established safety plans and protocols to protect both shelter residents and members of the community, regularly inspect shelters to assess whether shelter managements are adhering to these safety plans, and take immediate action **including cancellation of contracts** if shelter managements fail to enforce safety protocols.
6. Require providers make public their "Good Neighbor" policies, and ensure those policies are enforceable (e.g., residents who violate the policy are removed from the shelter). In addition to prohibitions on behaviors which negatively impact the safety and security of local residents and parents, "Good Neighbor" policies should include prohibitions on panhandling, particularly panhandling at open air seating of local restaurants.
7. Spearhead within City Council the creation of an effective strategy to create, SARA-compliant shelters for sex offenders that are not located in residential neighborhoods or within 1,000 feet of schools, playgrounds, and daycare centers.
8. Require that NYPD be notified when sex offenders risk level 2 or 3 move into the area. Require NYPD to alert local residents of the arrival of Level 2 and 3 sex offenders in their precincts.

9. Ensure the creation of a Community Advisory Board (CAB) for each of these three temporary shelters to enable open dialogue around shelter issues, and include requirements that each CAB include representatives from the local school and parent communities, as well as local business/restaurant owners; the creation of CABs is also included in Mayor de Blasio's Turning the Tide strategy.

Finally, we are very concerned that the residents of these hotels are not complying with pandemic protocols. Large groups as well as individual residents congregate in public areas without masks. This is not only a risk to the community, it is surely a violation of the social contracts that residents are required to adhere to. We seek enforcement to remedy this violation of policy mandated by Governor Cuomo.

Respectfully,

New Yorkers for Safer Streets

Cc: The Honorable Andrew Cuomo;

The Honorable Bill de Blasio; The Honorable Charles Schumer, U.S. Senate; The Honorable Scott Stringer, Comptroller, New York City; The Honorable Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., District Attorney of New York County; The Honorable Robert Jackson, New York State Senate; The Honorable Jose M. Serrano, New York State Senate; The Honorable Linda Rosenthal, New York State Assembly; The Honorable Corey Johnson, Speaker, New York City Council; The Honorable Donovan Richards, Chair - Public Safety Cmte., New York City Council; The Honorable Mark Levine, New York City Council, 7th District; The Honorable Jumaane Williams, New York City Public Advocate; The Honorable Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President; Commissioner Dermot Shea, NYPD; Chief Fausto Pichardo, Chief of Patrol, NYPD; Captain Neil Zuber, NYPD, 20th Precinct; Deputy Inspector Naoki Yaguchi, NYPD, 24th Precinct; Community Affairs Officer Stephen Jones, NYPD, 24th Precinct; Mr. Mark Diller, Chair, CB7; Principal and PA President, P.S. 87; Principal and PA President, P.S. 452; Principal and PA President, The Anderson School; Principal and PA President, P.S. 199; Principal, Success Academy Upper West; Principal and PA President, P.S. 166; Principal and PA President, P.S. 163; Principal and PA President, P.S. 75; Principal and PA President, P.S. 9; Principal and PA President, West End Secondary School; Principal and PA President, M862; Principal and PA President, P.S. 191; Principal and PA President, P.S. 333; Principal and PA President, P.S. 84; Principal and PA President, P.S. 859; Principal and PA President, P.S. 145; Principal and PA President, P.S. 165.