

**STATEMENT OF BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT
ADOLFO CARRIÓN, JR.**

BEFORE

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON AGING
AND THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON SENIOR CENTERS**

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
CITY HALL
NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

DECEMBER 4, 2008

Supporting and investing in seniors is, and has been, a top priority for my administration. Therefore, I want to ensure that the proposed restructuring of senior centers and services is properly managed and that any implemented reforms result in appropriate and egalitarian change.

We cannot afford to improperly or hastily overhaul the delivery of critical senior services. Already this year, senior programs have been cut by 3% and they face an additional 2.5% reduction, with another 5% cut proposed for next year. There are 111 senior programs funded by my office that could be eliminated as of July 1, 2009 as a result of the proposed RFP. The RFP in its current form will close centers and cut services and we cannot allow it to move forward.

The Department for the Aging (DFTA) is proposing to use the Borough President's senior monies to fund the modernization effort, an initiative that, as it stands, will reduce or eliminate senior services. The Borough Presidents have historically allocated funds, through DFTA's budget, to allow for direct contracting with neighborhood based senior programs, including the smaller, grassroots centers that have been deep-rooted in their communities for many years and now face eradication. The proposed change in the distribution of senior funding is simply unacceptable. I cannot agree to the unreasonable seizure of Borough President funds or support an RFP that will wreak havoc on programs and services for the seniors of Bronx County.

Providers will either be losing or gaining service contracts, which will require organizational overhaul and will affect service delivery. If the current RFP moves forward, many seniors throughout the Bronx will surely suffer due to the withdrawal of the services they are presently receiving and depend upon, including: food, transportation, case assistance, minor home repairs, landlord-tenant advice and guidance, information and referral services, senior trips, nutrition and health programs, etc. As well, many seniors have established relationships with their providers, with fellow center members and with familiar programs, and continuity in these relationships are essential to appropriately serving the senior population. Any changes in service delivery must be implemented in such a way as to guarantee seniors are not lost in the shuffle.

DFTA must understand the needs of seniors and sufficiently plan for the changes that will affect senior centers. Knowing the needs, wants, expectations and motivations of both current center participants and prospective members is vital to the success of the proposed modernization effort. The voice of seniors must be heard and, therefore, I ask that a long-range and comprehensive study be performed that will document current and future need. Welcoming this exchange of ideas may also help alleviate fears that proposed DFTA changes will damage rather than strengthen existing senior programs.

Additionally, a study of services provided at senior centers is crucial to clarifying the current situation at the centers. Revamping the entire structure of the senior center system without first examining a wide range of achievements and failures and testing new initiatives via pilot programs is imprudent. Relying on data relating to participation in meals programs does not appropriately capture current use; efforts must be made to

track senior's attendance and movement around the senior center system to better determine actual use and program participation.

These concerns must be addressed in order to properly evaluate the centers and the services seniors receive, as well as to prepare for the growing and diverse needs of tomorrow's seniors. According to NYCPlan2030, the senior population is expected to increase by 44% by the year 2030. Closing senior centers when such a large surge in the senior population is anticipated is counterintuitive; adequate time and study must be allowed for evaluation and planning so that irreversible mistakes are not made.

The nation's first senior center was established in the Bronx in 1943. I am proud to say that I have allocated \$1.7 million to senior services and programs since 2002. I want to make certain that centers in the Bronx, and throughout the city, continue to flourish both in the services they provide and the communities they serve.