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September 15, 2014

Lilliam Barrios-Paoli
Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services
City Hall
New York City, NY 10007

Dear Ms. Barrios-Paoli:

I write concerning the Department of Homeless Services recent siting of a shelter for homeless families at the former Capri Whitestone Motel, located at 555 Hutchinson River Parkway, Bronx, NY 10465. Moreover, I disagree with and object to this short sighted and hastily made decision.

Historically, the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) has placed our homeless families, adult families and singles in shelters throughout The Bronx without input from the communities in which they are placed or the elected officials and community boards who represent them. On occasion, these sites are located in problematic areas without appropriate resources and/or adequate maintenance of facilities.

I understand that we have reached a high of 55,000 homeless families within our shelter system and capacity to place them is a challenge in all five boroughs. We do not dispute the need to place them in housing, but the way in which sites are selected without community consultation.

I firmly believe that DHS should work more closely with the communities in which they look to place homeless individuals and families. DHS' recent decision to implement a shelter at the Capri Whitestone Motel was made without input from local elected officials and the community-at-large. In addition, consideration was not given to the long-term planning and major economic development projects in the surrounding area, including a forthcoming world-class golf course and several new retail centers.

It would also appear that DHS is not giving appropriate consideration to the families it is placing at this site, either. This area is primarily industrial with some small residential homes, and is not conducive for the 95 families that you are seeking to house there. These families will be in an area with minimal bus service or access to mass transit, schools that are over capacity, the constant traffic of an adjacent highway and other transportation issues.

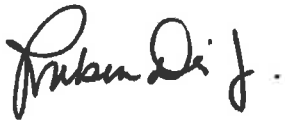
These families will only feel even more displaced if they are housed in this area, as the isolation of this area will only isolate them further.

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I remain concerned with how these sites are determined and the impact on the families, as well as the neighbors, such sitings have. Again, I am not opposed to sheltering our homeless families, but I am opposed to sheltering them at this site.

I look forward to hearing from you to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruben Diaz Jr." with a period at the end. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ruben Diaz Jr.