



MELINDA KATZ
PRESIDENT OF THE BOROUGH OF QUEENS
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

STATE OF THE BOROUGH ADDRESS
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(Remarks as Prepared for Delivery)

Shalom. Nín hảo. Assalamu Alaikum. Anh-young Ha-shim-ni-kkah. Hyālō. Namastē. Bonjour.

Buenos dias y bienvenidos. Soy Melinda Katz, Presidenta del Condado de Queens. I am Melinda Katz, and it is my honor to serve as President of our great Borough of Queens.

Our neighborhoods are home to families that hail from over 120 countries and speak over 135 languages. Here in Queens, there is so much to celebrate. We're joined here today by many who share in this pride and who work together to make Queens better.

Quick thanks to Councilmember Julissa Ferreras for her cameo today. She has made Queens proud as the Council's Finance Chair and we are proud of her.

And our MC has already acknowledged many of our key partners in government. But I'd like to personally recognize the Community Boards and our Queens General Assembly, thank you for joining us. Also, thank you to our city workers, particularly of the NYPD, the FDNY and Sanitation – our city could not run without you.

And a hearty congratulations to our newest State Senator, the beloved Leroy Comrie! He served with distinction and invaluable counsel as Deputy Borough President in my first year, and we're so proud to have him in Albany.

I'd like to extend a special thanks to our distinguished host, Queens College, as well as to our sponsor and proud Queens native, JetBlue.

Families keep us grounded and I would like to thank my brothers Michael and Matthew Katz for joining us today. As the video says, the definition of family is so personal. Folks here know Norman Adler as a union leader and state official. My kids know him and his wife, Michelle Shackelford, as Uncle Norman and Aunt DeeDee. They are here today and I thank them for adopting all of us.

Also to Nathan Smith and Doug Forand. Your counsel and friendship has been priceless. I thank you.

I also want to thank my Chief of Staff, Jay Bond, who leads an unbelievable team at Borough Hall. Please help me in thanking my entire Borough Hall family.

While today is a day when we celebrate Queens, let's take a moment to reflect on the work and the sacrifice of those who allow us to live safely in our communities and in our homes. With a heavy heart, we honor the service of two of New York's Finest, Detective Wenjian Liu and Detective Rafael Ramos, who were killed while doing what the police do – putting themselves on the line to protect us. Please join me in a moment of silence for these fallen heroes.

In addition, three weeks ago, Queens lost a visionary native son with the passing of Governor Mario Cuomo. A brilliant orator and a legendary three-term governor, Mario Cuomo exemplified the American Dream that is so alive and well here in Queens. More than anyone, Mario Cuomo understood the greatness of our borough and the nation we represent. He spoke of the "Family of America", because he knew that we can only move forward when we all stand together as one family. Governor Cuomo demonstrated unequivocally, through both restraint and action, that all lives matter. Please join me in a moment of silence for the great Governor Mario Cuomo.

Thank you again for being here this morning. It means so much to me. Being Borough President is more than just a job for me – it's a passion and a fulfillment of a dream my parents had so many years ago.

Today is my first State of the Borough, and we're holding it here in Colden Center not only because of the great institution that is Queens College, but really because it was the home of the Queens Symphony Orchestra, and thus, the home of my family. I spent my childhood on this stage, even taught Constitutional Law on this campus, and so I thought it most fitting to hold my first address here. I stand here on day #387 in office, and in the next 35 minutes hope to share our milestones reached in the first year, as well as our vision and priorities for our future.

My parents believed that Queens held all the elements of any great city, and that no one should need to cross a bridge or tunnel to experience arts, culture, fine dining or great neighborhoods. I inherited their vision while growing up here, from my childhood in Forest Hills to my education at our public schools to studying law at St. John's.

And now I am raising my own children – Hunter and Carter – in the very same home in Forest Hills where I grew up. My kids keep me grounded when shaping our city's policies and planning for our Borough's future.

Because of them, our motto at Borough Hall is simply this: If it's good for our families, it's good for Queens.

For families in Southeast Queens, who face chronic problems with flooding, foreclosures and sanitation, we created a first-ever, inter-agency, solutions-oriented task force that meets monthly to tackle every problem head-on. When government makes quality of life a priority and demands action by city agencies, we can deliver results. And improving our overall quality of life is good for our families, therefore good for Queens.

To help small businesses, we dedicated nearly two million dollars just in the past year to improve the commercial corridors throughout our neighborhoods. From Jamaica Avenue to Beach Channel Drive, Steinway Street to 116th Street, these streets are home to thousands of small businesses – the backbone of our economy – that hire locally and sell locally. They support our communities, and are good for our families, therefore good for Queens.

To better service our veterans and the military community, this spring we'll open a Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs satellite office in Borough Hall. More vets call Queens home than in any other borough, and they should not have to cross a bridge or a tunnel to access benefits. They and their families served our country and protected our freedom, and assuring their well-being is good for our families, therefore good for Queens.

It was a priority to help implement the largest Municipal ID program in America right here in the international capital of the world, so that regardless of where someone hails from, that person can enter a City Building, or that parent can visit their own son or daughter in school. Because tools like this <<SHOW IDNYC CARD>>> help ensure equal access to city services and civic engagement, and it's good for our families, therefore good for Queens.

I'm unabashedly biased toward our borough. I'm personally vested in its success. Here in Queens, we offer so much to the world, and we've marked our nation's history throughout generations.

In 1964, we introduced "Peace Through Understanding" to the world at The World's Fair. In 1946, Queens was the host for the very first General Assembly of the United Nations.

Even as early as 1657, Queens was the site of the Flushing Remonstrance, that brave proclamation engendered under religious persecution. This precious document stands as the precursor to the First Amendment, to our fundamental freedoms of religion, speech and assembly. And in a world left horribly uncertain after police executions, Eric Garner and *Charlie Hebdo*, these are the very rights that we now must protect, exercise and honor.

Queens has contributed much to the world, and folks around the globe know and benefit from what we've had to offer. And it continues to this day.

You may say that you've seen New York, but you really haven't until you've experienced Queens.

We made tourism a high priority of my administration as soon as I took office last year because it is one of the strongest tools for growth. We started first by changing the signs on roadways leading in from all the bridges and tunnels into Queens. They now read, "Welcome to Queens – The World's Borough."

MSNMoney, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *TimeOut New York* and *Streeteasy.com* all agree that Queens is hot and on the move. In fact, *Lonely Planet* recently designated Queens the number one destination of choice for travelers in the USA.

Great neighborhoods, shopping, professional sports, booming new businesses and nightlife, arts and an incomparable array of cuisines from all over the world, Queens is a unique borough, unlike any other, nor do we strive to be any other borough. We don't have to claim to be the center of the universe, but we are without a doubt the intersection of the world.

Some of our families can trace generations to specific blocks in our neighborhoods. But also in our borough of over 2.2 million residents today, half were born outside of the United States of America.

Both new arrivals and long-established families create the communities which make it uniquely attractive, for visitors and for investors alike. And like generations before them, they come here

to work hard and raise their children as Americans. People spend their life savings to come here from all over the world just to educate their children right where we are sitting right now.

And it's the voices of all these families that have been the focus of my first year, hearing their concerns and appreciating their input as priceless to our government's decision-making process.

Government is most effective when it is inclusive. And this has been our M.O. at Borough Hall in everything we've done and continue to do, from schools to budgets to Sandy recovery to economic development. Government makes the biggest impact when it is engaged with our communities. Because civic engagement is good for our families, therefore good for Queens.

Part of that is through our 14 Community Boards made up of nearly 700 dedicated, civic-minded residents who serve a critical role in shaping city policies. And for the record, I am opposed to term limits for Community Board members. The expertise of the long-standing members balances well with the many new folks that are being appointed. I have great faith in our process and in our City Council members to recommend appointments that are truly representative of the respective neighborhoods. Over 26 percent of all members currently on our Community Boards have been serving for less than three years. And every member, regardless of tenure, is actually required to reapply every two years for their unpaid positions. Every two years, they are all subject to review and reconsideration by local elected officials. We have maximized outreach for this and we strongly urge anyone interested and willing to make this substantial commitment, to apply.

Everything we are talking about today must be done in collaboration with our government and civic partners. When everyone agrees on something, that's just a bonus.

Celebrating the 50th and 75th anniversary of the World's Fair was one such example of collaboration. 60,000 of us gathered in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park to commemorate the World's Fair motto, "Peace Through understanding," a theme we live and breathe everyday here in Queens. It was quite powerful.

So moving forward, this is where we will gather for an annual "Queens Day" to celebrate our diversity and unite as one borough.

But in recent decades, the New York State Pavilion, such a large part of the 1964 World's Fair has fallen into significant disrepair from years of neglect and disinvestment. While growing up here, I heard so many debates about whether someone should save it, whether someone should knock it down. I heard time and time again from groups like People for the Pavilion and advocacy groups, but the choice by government had not been made, much less executed. So I made it.

Last year we secured nearly six million city dollars to start the restoration process. In our first budget we put in one million, but I am proud to say that Mayor Bill de Blasio put in an additional \$4.2 million, and Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito allocated substantial funds as well. She is here with us today. I would like to thank her for the many ways she has shown her dedication to queens.

The World's Fair legacy has lent us a deep appreciation for our cultural institutions, which are major economic drivers here in Queens. So we committed our tax dollars into these investments.

A quarter of our capital budget for Fiscal Year 2015 alone went to cultural organizations for capital improvements. With this, our treasures will do some significant system upgrades, like green energy for the Queens Botanical Garden, sound for the popular Queens Theater, lighting for the historic Flushing Town Hall, which by the way is just down the street from the Flushing Remonstrance. The funds will renovate Selma's House at the Louis Armstrong House Museum, and expand worldwide art exhibits at the Queens Museum, which was the site of the first UN General Assembly.

In addition, we've allocated investments to cultural programs that fuel tourism, like the annual Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival, the Jim Hensen exhibit at the Museum of the Moving Image, heritage events at the Turkish Cultural Center, and performances at the Thalia Spanish Theatre.

All this and more, so that our families continue learning, visitors keep on coming, and folks keep on investing.

Queens offers a dynamic and attractive landscape for investment and job creation, which means better opportunities for families and visitors to live, work and play. It's an exciting time for Queens.

As we move forward, the opportunity guised as a challenge for government is to keep Queens competitive as the most attractive option for families to not just move here, but more importantly to stay here. And we're doing that in a number of ways.

In western Queens, we're building the city's leading tech ecosystem, encouraging access, innovation and entrepreneurship.

That's why we are working with Coalition for Queens and we have created a task force, co-chaired by Councilmember Jimmy Van Bramer, to create the Queens Tech Strategic Plan. Over 50 start-ups like Krato, Digital Natives and Shapeways 3D Printing have already hatched here in Queens. To augment this growth, we're planning to launch targeted IT and QA Workforce Training programs, as well as a centralized internship program directly linking folks to opportunities with this burgeoning tech sector in our borough.

And that's just the beginning. By leveraging Western Queens' ample space for growth, its projected development, and its proximity to the Cornell NYC Tech campus, we will steer our borough into the competitive lane of the digital age.

Significant investments in our infrastructure are also a key to our success. I am committed to this because it will make the difference between staying competitive or stifling our growth potential. Take for example JFK and LaGuardia, New York City's gateways to the world. About 48,000 people alone are employed at both airports and it generates over \$50 billion in economic activity every year. Yet the investments in these gateways have historically fallen short.

I applaud the Governor and the Port Authority for investing additional billions of capital to redevelop LaGuardia's central terminal and airport infrastructure, especially his proposal announced yesterday to create an AirTrain to LaGuardia. I'm also proud to have been appointed by Governor Cuomo to serve on the committee on airport redesigns and modernization.

As much as our airports are economic assets to the region, with it comes the need to mitigate the direct and daily negative impacts upon the communities immediately surrounding them. Chronic noise and air pollution plague many of our neighborhoods. So we've coordinated meetings on

reducing airplane noise and on development around the airports. To maximize community input when flight patterns over the borough are either created or modified, we continue working closely with the FAA. And a quick thanks here to Port Authority Executive Director Patrick Foye.

Because now is the time for all of us – the Port, the FAA, elected officials and the communities around the airports impacted by noise and other quality of life issues – to work together to leverage the exciting new technologies that will hopefully make our skies safer and quieter.

We have our major business hubs in Queens, but we also rely on small businesses. We're improving the ways in which we help our small businesses thrive. Because thriving local businesses are good for our families, therefore good for Queens.

Oftentimes, the best thing government can do is to just get out of their way and resolve outstanding issues expeditiously.

Many business owners are weighed down by citations, wasting precious time and resources navigating bureaucratic issues. This year we will work in conjunction with agencies on programs like the "Business Acceleration Team" that will help business owners resolve outstanding violations more promptly.

We've already been helping to untangle miscommunications between agencies that unnecessarily delay business openings.

In a recent example, local Astoria resident Dennis Lee was ready to open up his neighborhood coffee shop on 30th Street. But even though he had properly registered the business, he kept receiving conflicting information from different City departments and agencies. The City wanted to help but the back-and-forth delayed the opening of his shop for months. I always tell my staff, "I asked you for the time. Don't build me a clock." So my staff stepped in.

We quickly ironed out the tangles of miscommunication between the agencies, and soon thereafter, Mr. Lee's "Astoria Coffee" finally opened its doors for business and has been a boon to the neighborhood.

In addition to connecting businesses with government resources, we're working with agencies to link our underemployed to job opportunities. Jobs are obviously good for our families, and therefore good for Queens. That's why my office sponsored or co-sponsored eight job fairs for local residents, leading to 450 applicants getting hired for real jobs.

That's why in Downtown Jamaica, we've launched with City Hall the Jamaica Planning Initiative. Jamaica is one of the last affordable commercial hubs that offers housing, amenities and transportation. It really is one of the most strategically positioned yet lowest-priced real estate left in town. We've undergone a community-wide planning process over the course of two public conferences and 30 meetings in the past nine months.

In partnership with the Mayor's Office, and together with local stakeholders, we will create a diverse, vibrant and accessible community around one of our City's great central business districts and inter-modal transportation hubs.

Together, we are not only creating jobs, we are building neighborhoods. Astoria Cove is a 2.2 million square foot mixed-use project that was approved in November, but not without some

effective checkpoints along the way. I am especially proud of working in tandem with our great new Councilmember Costa Constantinides on this.

Now, given the scale and scope of the project, I had said NO to the original proposal last year because of what I considered insufficiencies. Insufficiencies like in the proportion of affordable housing units, investments in alternative mass transit options, a time line for school construction and skilled labor commitments. I mean, it was simply unacceptable, for example, that such a large project in Queens came without the assurances of a Project Labor Agreement.

So the City negotiated. Hard.

The developer agreed to up the share of affordable housing units from the originally proposed 20 percent to 27 percent. There will also be a \$5 million commitment for a ferry dock, a new school, a new supermarket and public waterfront access. And there is now a PLA that ensures the project is built and operated by skilled labor and in compliance with prevailing wage.

So we're proud to report that the planned Astoria Cove project is now consistent with our borough's commitment to responsible development. It's good for our families, therefore good for Queens.

Coming up, the Flushing West Study has been announced by the Department of City Planning. The objective is to provide new affordable housing and development opportunities and provide public access to the waterfront for passive and recreational uses. In 2015, they will come up with recommendations that will eventually undergo the ULURP process.

We've talked a lot about the city's investments in our infrastructure and business, but the #1 economic investment we can make for our families is, of course, education.

The first thing any parent asks about a prospective neighborhood is, "How are the schools?"

In Queens, we have some of the best school districts in the entire city. It's remarkable because our school districts rank among the highest in overcrowding rates across the city. Some of our schools are at over 200 percent capacity! Yet despite this, our schools manage to boast some of the highest graduation rates and lowest dropout rates.

There are many reasons for this, but I believe a big part of it is our parents. The more vocal the parents, the better the school. I think the Department of Education's worst day may have been when my son entered the first grade.

So as soon as I started at Borough Hall, we convened a Parent Advisory Board. It provides parents a forum to meet with senior city and state education officials and a direct channel to be heard on education issues.

To strengthen and empower more parents, we've hosted a training workshop at Borough Hall for existing PTAs as well as for parents interested in getting involved. We also conducted workshops for school principals on how to apply for capital funding for their schools.

But priority #1 is addressing the critical overcrowding in our schools.

We need to get our kids, once and for all, out of these trailers that we call classrooms. Our kids deserve better and we should demand it. So we're working closely with the School Construction

Authority, and our great partner President and CEO Lorraine Grillo who is here today. Together, we've implemented some real expiration dates for these rusty, dilapidated trailers. We're doing this by identifying underutilized spaces and converting them into instructional areas.

And so by the end of this year, ALL the trailers at P.S. 55 in Jamaica, P.S. 70 in Astoria, P.S. 92 in Corona, and at Richmond Hill High School will finally be removed.

Other schools are on track to be trailer-less within a few years, including P.S. 11 and I.S. 125 in Woodside, P.S. 163 in Fresh Meadows, and even Bayside High School!

All of this is with the singular goal of elevating our public schools and ensuring that our kids remain globally competitive in the 21st century. Because it's good for our families and therefore good for Queens. But to achieve this, we need more.

That includes finding more locations for full-day pre-k right in our own neighborhoods. The enrollments for full day pre-k in Queens nearly quadrupled in one year. This is a fantastic program that directly impacts so many families, and here we're identifying more locations with Community-Based Organizations to place more pre-k seats. I ask that if you have ideas for potential locations that you email our office.

So we need more.

More pre-k locations. More Gifted & Talented programs across schools. More investments in higher education, especially in CUNY. More resources for capital improvements and updated technology inside our K-12 classrooms, including Special Needs. More college-ready graduates and greater economic opportunities so that they stay or come back to build in Queens. More focus on real education, actual learning, and less teaching to the test.

Most of you know, I have a first-grader. I have the privilege of helping Carter with his math homework most nights. I love his teachers and his principal. They are absolutely wonderful and there is no question about their commitment and devotion to our kids' success.

But I can tell you what I am not a fan of: it's Common Core.

Although I agree we need standards. No one is arguing that we don't. As a Queens parent, I feel in my gut, though, that there's something wrong here.

I am an attorney born-and-raised in Forest Hills who graduated summa cum laude from UMass, and I very often still can't figure out the "correct" way of getting my son to the "correct" answer even if his actual answer to the math question is right.

It's not common core – it's more like a common problem.

And I hear it from parents from every country in every neighborhood here in Queens. Clearly something's got to be revamped, and now. Because when it comes to the quality of our kids' education, there's no limit for better.

A tremendous part of our kids' education is inherent in our beloved public libraries. They're community hubs that are safe and enriching, where parents know their children can go after-school. Where our seniors go to log online or read the news in various languages. Where

residents go for essential job training and literacy courses. Where people go to apply for their Muni IDs. Our libraries are truly one of our borough's most treasured assets.

But in just my first few weeks upon taking office, a series of disturbing revelations emerged about years and years of questionable spending practices by the Queens Library's higher-ups.

So we worked with government colleagues, and under a new law sponsored by Assemblymember Jeff Aubry and Senator Mike Gianaris, the Mayor and I were able to reform and restructure the Board, which included removing the now-former trustees who had blocked transparency around the Library's finances.

Sunlight really is the best disinfectant.

The Library was finally able to open up its books as requested by City Comptroller Scott Stringer for a thorough investigation. Let's give it up to our city's chief financial officer, Scott Stringer who has joined us.

I'd like to thank the new and some remaining members of the Board of Trustees, who selflessly serve as unpaid volunteers to oversee an invaluable library system.

To all the dedicated staff and volunteers in each and every single Queens Library branch, I'd like to extend my deep appreciation. Throughout last year's dark saga, you were the face of your library that the public interacted with every day. When all else was in flux, you managed to keep up the morale and the day-to-day going in your community's hub. You are what make our libraries good for our families, and therefore good for Queens. So on behalf of the World's Borough, we thank you.

Taking care of our children means taking care of the entire family.

And the reality for many Queens families today is that, our grandparents and elders are helping by raising the grandchildren so that the parents can go to work. This is a good thing.

So we need to keep our elders close to home, in the communities they've known for decades, and we need to help make that an affordable option. It's not only the right and moral thing to do, it's economically prudent.

Neighborhood by neighborhood, many people come up to me and say, "Melinda, you're going to make Queens the best commodity of New York City. Now just keep it affordable!" And that challenge is very real today.

In fact, among the intake of over a thousand constituent service requests in my first year at Borough Hall, the #1 issue was about the need for more affordable housing. In particular, senior affordable housing. So we've been hard at work.

In every single meeting with a developer since I took office as Borough President, my first question is always, ALWAYS, "How many units will be dedicated to senior affordable housing?" So here's what we got.

In Richmond Hill, we cut the ribbon on 65 units of senior affordable housing at the Richmond Hill Senior Living Residences. In South Jamaica, we'll have 52 units of senior affordable housing on Guy R. Brewer Boulevard in partnership with the Calvary Baptist Church. In Corona, we'll

break ground on another 67 units of senior affordable housing at the HANAC-Corona Senior Residence. In Downtown Flushing, developers are chomping at the bit to build senior affordable housing slated in what's currently Muni Lot 3. And we're working on more.

As I said, the need for affordable housing is a family issue. In Downtown Jamaica, we cut the ribbon on 20 units of affordable housing on 161st Street. In Richmond Hill, we cut the ribbon on 117 units of affordable housing on Jamaica Avenue. In Astoria, 483 units of affordable housing are planned for Halletts Point, which will break ground this October. In Hunters Point South, we're nearing completion on over 3,000 market-rate low- and middle-income housing units that will adorn a waterfront esplanade. And in Astoria Cove, we'll create 460 units of affordable housing. Congratulations again, Costa, for getting this done.

Indeed, affordable housing is good for our families, and without a doubt, good for Queens.

As our communities and families grow, we must also balance that growth with neighborhood preservation, which has been key to our borough. Remember Queens is the only borough that still says our neighborhood on our postal code. Since 2002, 45 neighborhoods in Queens have been contextually zoned. That's over 6,000 city blocks. It's important to balance high density with preserving communities.

So I'm proposing to create a specific zoning designation to protect neighborhoods that are primarily defined by single-family row houses, like the ones we find in Maspeth and Ridgewood. Pat Dolan of the Queens Civic Congress was right. This will help preserve places that so many families have called their home in a more predictable way.

There's an unprecedented citywide crisis that our current administration has inherited, and that is one of staggering homelessness. The number of homeless families, teens and children today is at record highs. Combatting this crisis is imperative, and will require a strong, multi-faceted commitment by the city toward permanent housing.

So I was frankly disappointed by NYCHA's proposal last year to allocate only 750 public housing apartments annually for homeless families.

We've urged the administration to work with NYCHA to increase this annual allocation, from 750 to at least twenty-five hundred public housing units.

We not only need to plan for the known, but also be prepared for the unexpected. We talk about families staying here, but it's disasters like Superstorm Sandy that truly test a community's resilience.

For post-Sandy Rockaways and other low-lying communities in Queens, I insist on not just rebuilding, but rebuilding better and stronger. A key component of this is making sure that the voices of the people who know their community better than anyone else are an integral part of the rebuilding efforts.

We played a vital role in the institution of a number of policy changes within the City's Superstorm Sandy housing recovery process. We put key players at the table every single month to go item-by-item to cut through the red tape that so often slows down progress in government. Among those changes is the streamlining of the application process for developers and architects submitting construction plans to the Department of Buildings, where these plans had been limited exclusively to being submitted in Manhattan.

Through my working side-by-side with the Department of Buildings Commissioner Rick Chandler and Derek Lee, we have set in motion plans to place a satellite office at Queens Borough Hall. Along with the satellite office comes the opportunity to bring this application process closer to home for the hurricane victims while expediting the approval of plans for construction permits.

Through our work with the Hurricane Relief Task Force we have also reached out to thousands of Build-It-Back applicants who fell off the radar. Who lost faith in the process. We're bringing them back, under a new administration and new policies. I would like to thank Senior Advisor to the Mayor for Recovery, Resiliency and Infrastructure Bill Goldstein and Amy Peterson of Build-It-Back NYC for their tireless dedication to the survivors of Superstorm Sandy. I know we have a long way to go but at least we are moving in the right direction.

Finally, I want to address one unfinished piece of business for the Rockaways – the Rockaway Ferry. This temporary ferry service was provided following the storm. While in service, it proved to be extremely useful to residents lacking real transit options, and was an economic generator as well, bringing people in from other parts of the city to come visit the Rockaways. Despite our efforts, the service has been eliminated for now. But I will continue to fight alongside the community for inclusion of permanent ferry service to and from the Rockaways in the Five Borough Ferry Plan.

In other strides on behalf of other survivors of Queens who are a testament to our borough's resilience, Queens has made great strides in improving services for survivors of domestic violence and their families.

Thanks in large part to the NYPD and our District Attorney Judge Richard Brown, Queens currently has the highest domestic violence conviction rate and the lowest dismissal rate in New York City. We've also significantly increased support services for survivors through the Queens Family Justice Center.

And this past October, in a joint effort between my office, DA Brown and Safe Horizon, we applied for and received a \$900,000 federal grant award through the Justice Department's Violence against Women Grant. These monies will go a long way toward sustaining our efforts to combat domestic violence. District Attorney Judge Brown is here today. Thank you Judge Brown for your outstanding commitment to breaking the cycle.

In a borough of families, enhancing access to healthcare is a major priority. There is nothing more important than your family's health. And access to healthcare.

First, we must make sure that those without insurance register for health insurance. To make that happen we have done registration drives at Elmhurst Hospital, Queens Hospital Center and Jamaica Hospital.

But too many emergency rooms are over-capacity due to the closure of five acute-care hospitals in the past seven years.

Last year I visited the North Shore LIJ Free-Standing Emergency Room at the old St. Vincent's with Congressman Joseph Crowley. I was taken by how much they offer in terms of urgent care, services like surgeries and outpatient rehab that aren't covered by other facilities.

The Free-Standing ERs could help alleviate the stress on our existing ERs. Most importantly, they would accept anybody, regardless of their status with their insurance or immigration, in those times of ultimate critical need.

As a city, we're at a tough crossroads. But in every challenge there is opportunity, to make it better, stronger. Here... you can still do a lot in one generation. That is, after all, the promise of the American Dream.

And the successes of past generations keep this Dream very much alive and well here in the World's Borough. It's why folks everywhere work so hard to come here, to get educated, to start a business, to get their kids in our schools, to start and raise their families right here in Queens.

And it's the voices of all these families, past, present and even my own, that have been the focus of my first year.

Because in this great borough we call home, even with all our diversity, we're reminded every day that people, at our core, have that much more in common ----- than we do different. We are about finding a better life for our children than we ever dreamed for ourselves.

And so we stand united, in our determination to keep THIS a borough of families, for families. Because we know that if it's good for our families, it's good for Queens!

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PRESIDENT OF THE BOROUGH OF QUEENS
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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INTRO

COMMUNITY BOARDS

TOURISM/CULTURAL

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CLOSING