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**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

COMMITTEE REPORT OF THE LEGISLATIVE DIVISION

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**COMMITTEE ON AGING**

Hon. Crystal Hudson, *Chair*

April 4, 2024

**OVERSIGHT: INTERAGENCY COORDINATION ON OLDER ADULT ISSUES**

**INT. NO. 689**

By Council Members Hudson, Gennaro, Gutiérrez, Zhuang and Louis

**TITLE:**

A Local Law to amend the New York city charter, in relation to a cabinet for older New Yorkers

## I. INTRODUCTION

On April 4, 2024, the Committee on Aging, chaired by Council Member Crystal Hudson, will hold an oversight hearing on *Interagency Coordination on Older Adult Issues*. Additionally, the Committee will consider Introduction Number (“Int. No.”) 689, sponsored by Council Member Hudson, in relation to a cabinet for older New Yorkers. Witnesses invited to testify include the New York City (“NYC” or “City”) Department for the Aging (DFTA), aging advocates, and other interested stakeholders.

## II. BACKGROUND

Older adults are rapidly becoming a larger percentage of the population nationally and in New York State (NYS).<sup>1</sup> As such, older adults are driving most of the population growth in NYS.<sup>2</sup> In NYC, which is currently home to 1.8 million older New Yorkers, the population of residents aged 65 years and older increased by 36 percent over the past decade, from 1,010,156 in 2011 to 1,373,495 in 2021.<sup>3</sup> Older New Yorkers currently account for 16.2 percent of the City’s population.<sup>4</sup> Among the boroughs, Queens is home to the largest older adult population of any county in the State, while Brooklyn is home to the second largest older adult population.<sup>5</sup> By 2040, DFTA projects the population of older adults to reach 1.86 million, or 20.6 percent of the City’s population.<sup>6</sup>

As the City’s agency tasked with serving older adults, DFTA’s overarching mission is to “eliminate ageism and ensure the dignity and quality of life of... older New Yorkers,” and the

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Bowles, Eli Dvorkin & Charles Shaviro, *Keeping Pace with an Aging New York State*, Center for an Urban Future (Jan. 2023), accessible at <https://nycfuture.org/research/keeping-pace-with-an-aging-new-york-state>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> NYC Department for the Aging, *Commissioner’s Message* (n.d.), accessible at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/about/commissioners-message.page>.

agency is “deeply committed to helping older adults age in their homes and creating a community-care approach that reflects a model age-inclusive city.”<sup>7</sup> To fulfill its mission, DFTA promotes, administers, and coordinates the development and provision of services that allow older New Yorkers to maintain independence and participation in their communities.<sup>8</sup> DFTA supports a broad range of services, both directly and through approximately 400 direct service contracts with community-based organizations across the five boroughs.<sup>9</sup>

These services include, but are not limited to, older adult centers (OACs), which offer meals, activities, classes and activities, fitness programs and social services;<sup>10</sup> geriatric mental health, which are offered in various languages at OACs;<sup>11</sup> in-home services for older adults who require assistance taking care of themselves;<sup>12</sup> caregiving, which provides resources and programs to help those caring for older adults;<sup>13</sup> health insurance assistance to help older adults with questions about Medicare;<sup>14</sup> crisis intervention and safety planning for older adults experiencing elder abuse and crime;<sup>15</sup> Friendly Visiting, which is a volunteer program to connect socially

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<sup>7</sup> The City of New York, Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report: Preliminary Fiscal 2024 (Jan. 2024), 222, accessed at [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/2024\\_pmmr.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/2024_pmmr.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Older Adult Centers (n.d.), accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/older-adult-center.page>.

<sup>11</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Geriatric Mental Health (n.d.), accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/geriatric-mental-health.page>.

<sup>12</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: In-Home Services (n.d.), accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/in-home-services.page>.

<sup>13</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Caregiving (n.d.), accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/caregiving.page>.

<sup>14</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Health Insurance Assistance (n.d.), accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/health-insurance-assistance.page>.

<sup>15</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Elder Abuse & Crime (n.d.), accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/elder-abuse-crime.page>.

isolated older adults;<sup>16</sup> older adult workforce programs;<sup>17</sup> volunteer opportunities;<sup>18</sup> housing support;<sup>19</sup> transportation services;<sup>20</sup> legal assistance;<sup>21</sup> Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities;<sup>22</sup> a Bill Payer Program to help older adults organize and pay their bills on time;<sup>23</sup> and NY Connects, which provides one stop access to free, objective, comprehensive information and assistance to callers.<sup>24</sup>

### III. CABINET FOR OLDER NEW YORKERS

Given the unique and growing needs of its rapidly growing older adult population, it is essential that the City provides for efficient coordination among its agencies to ensure that it is an age-inclusive city. To that end, in September 2022, Mayor Eric Adams announced the NYC Cabinet for Older New Yorkers (“Cabinet”),<sup>25</sup> “[a]n inter-agency collaborative established to realize and institutionalize an age-inclusive New York City through structural, legislative, and systemic solutions.”<sup>26</sup> The Cabinet, which is chaired by DFTA Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-

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<sup>16</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Friendly Visiting (n.d.), *accessed at* <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/friendly-visiting.page>.

<sup>17</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Older Adult Workforce (n.d.), *accessed at* <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/older-adult-workforce.page>.

<sup>18</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Volunteer (n.d.), *accessed at* <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/volunteer.page>.

<sup>19</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Housing Support (n.d.), *accessed at* <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/housing-support.page>.

<sup>20</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Transportation (n.d.), *accessed at* <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/transportation.page>.

<sup>21</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Legal Help (n.d.), *accessed at* <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/legal-help.page>.

<sup>22</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (n.d.), *accessed at* <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/naturally-occurring-retirement-communities.page>.

<sup>23</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: Bill Payer Program (n.d.), *accessed at* <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/bill-payer-program.page>.

<sup>24</sup> New York City Department for the Aging, Services: NY Connects (n.d.), *accessed at* <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/ny-connects.page>.

<sup>25</sup> Office of the Mayor of New York City, “Mayor Adams Announces NYC Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, Coordinated City Agency Collective to Better Serve Residents Over 60” (Sept. 22, 2022), press release, *accessed at* <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/697-22/mayor-adams-nyc-cabinet-older-new-yorkers-coordinated-city-agency-collective-to>.

<sup>26</sup> New York City Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, Overview (n.d.), *accessed at* <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cabinetforoldernewyorkers/about/overview.page>.

Vázquez and includes members from 23 agencies, represents a cross-section of City agencies that provide services to older New Yorkers.<sup>27</sup>

According to its website, the Cabinet has several initiatives related to health, housing, intergenerational education, outreach and engagement, safety, and transportation.<sup>28</sup> Among those initiatives is educating front-line professionals on existing community-based services available for older adults, and institutionalizing an approach to regularly review and update trainings to keep them up-to-date.<sup>29</sup> With regard to housing, the Cabinet is seeking to increase enrollment in Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) benefits, as well as removing barriers to safe and affordable housing so that older New Yorkers can age in their homes and communities.<sup>30</sup> Concerning intergenerational outreach, the Cabinet launched an Anti-Ageism High School Resource Guide to educate students on ageism and its impact.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the Cabinet is seeking to educate NYC311 Call Center Representatives with information on aging services and age discrimination.<sup>32</sup> With regard to safety, the NYC Police Department has designated Older Adult Liaisons for each of the 77 Precincts and nine Police Service Areas.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, police officers are required to undergo older adult awareness and

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<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> New York City Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, Initiatives (n.d.), accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cabinetforoldernewyorkers/initiatives/health.page>.

<sup>29</sup> New York City Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, Initiatives: Health (n.d.), accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cabinetforoldernewyorkers/initiatives/health.page>.

<sup>30</sup> New York City Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, Initiatives: Housing (n.d.), accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cabinetforoldernewyorkers/initiatives/housing.page>.

<sup>31</sup> New York City Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, Initiatives: Intergenerational (n.d.), accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cabinetforoldernewyorkers/initiatives/intergenerational.page>.

<sup>32</sup> New York City Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, Initiatives: Outreach and Engagement (n.d.), accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cabinetforoldernewyorkers/initiatives/outreach-and-engagement.page>.

<sup>33</sup> New York City Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, Initiatives: Safety (n.d.), accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cabinetforoldernewyorkers/initiatives/safety.page>.

response training.<sup>34</sup> Lastly, concerning transportation, the Cabinet is seeking to ensure age-inclusive older adult pedestrian planning.<sup>35</sup>

#### **IV. LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS**

##### **Int. No. 689**

This bill would codify a Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, made up of the commissioners of city agencies or their designees and chaired by the commissioner of the Department for the Aging. The cabinet would facilitate inter-agency collaboration to improve services for older New Yorkers. The commissioner of the Department for the Aging would be required to report to the Council and the public on the activity of the Cabinet.

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

At this hearing, the Committee is interested in learning more about the Cabinet and other interagency collaboration regarding older adult issues. This includes an overview of the Cabinet's work to-date, meeting schedule and agenda, as well as priorities and goals and timeline to achieve those priorities and goals. The Committee is also interested in understanding how the Cabinet defines its priorities and goals, and what metrics are used to determine success. Lastly, the Committee would appreciate details on how the Cabinet is being supported to accomplish those goals.

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<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> New York City Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, Initiatives: Transportation (n.d.), *accessed at* <https://www.nyc.gov/site/cabinetforoldernewyorkers/initiatives/transportation.page>.

By Council Members Hudson, Gennaro, Gutiérrez, Zhuang and Louis

A Local Law to amend the New York city charter, in relation to a cabinet for older New Yorkers

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 66 of the New York city charter is amended by adding a new section 2405 to read as follows:

§ 2405. Cabinet for older New Yorkers. a. Definitions. For the purposes of this section, the term “mayor’s office for people with disabilities” means the office established under executive order number 17 for the year 1990 or any successor office or agency that carries out the same or substantially similar functions.

b. Cabinet. There shall be a cabinet for older New Yorkers. The cabinet shall meet at least once every 6 months.

c. Duties. The cabinet shall facilitate coordination across agencies to further the elimination of age-related barriers and inequities in the provision of services to older adults and review current and future initiatives to ensure that they are inclusive of older adults.

d. Members. The cabinet shall be composed of the following members, or their designees:

1. Commissioner for the aging, who shall serve as chair;

2. Commissioner of information technology and telecommunications;

3. Chair of the civic engagement commission;

4. Commissioner of cultural affairs;

5. Commissioner of health and mental hygiene;

6. Commissioner of housing preservation and development;

7. Commissioner of parks and recreation;

8. Commissioner of social services;

9. Commissioner of transportation;

10. Commissioner of youth and community development;

11. Director of the office of immigrant affairs;

12. Director of the mayor's office for people with disabilities; and

13. Commissioner of veterans' services.

e. Required invitations. The commissioner for the aging shall also invite to participate in the work of the cabinet the following persons, or their designees:

1. Chancellor of the city school district of the city of New York;

2. Chief executive officer of the New York city health and hospitals corporation; and

3. Chief executive officer of the New York city housing authority.

f. Optional invitations. The commissioner for the aging may also invite representatives of any other relevant federal, state or local agency to participate in the work of the cabinet.

g. Report. One year after the effective date of the local law that added this section and annually thereafter, the commissioner for the aging shall submit to the speaker of the council and post on the website of the department a report on the work of the cabinet. Such report shall include but need not be limited to:

1. Actions taken or proposed as a result of the meeting of the cabinet;

2. Attendance at cabinet meetings, and

3. Minutes of cabinet meetings.

§ 2. This local law takes effect immediately.

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