

Council Member Melinda Katz recently favored Queens Civic Congress with a copy of this commentary on DFTA's re-structuring scheme. Queens Civic Congress thanks Council Member Katz for her advocacy on behalf of our senior citizens.

Council Member Melinda Katz

## **Modernization of Senior Centers**

February 25, 2008

The City Department for the Aging (DFTA) last month announced a cost-cutting proposal disguised as "modernization" that could undermine the progress our city has made in providing much-needed services to seniors. I urge Mayor Bloomberg and the DFTA to reconsider these potentially damaging changes to programs elderly New Yorkers depend on.

The proposed modernization effort focuses on two core services, home delivered meals and senior centers. These programs are vitally important to our seniors and should not be restructured without keeping an eye on the manner in which they are delivered. I am concerned that DFTA has not fully addressed the details and potential problems which may arise as a result of the significant changes they seek to implement. I don't believe anyone wants to create a system that reaches fewer seniors than we currently serve.

Neighborhood senior centers are so much more than bureaucratic government offices. Senior centers offer the opportunity to socialize; participate in educational, recreational, and health programs; and have a hot meal. It is important that centers continue to be able to provide programming and services that address the cultural and linguistic needs of the neighborhoods they serve. In order to attain this goal, senior centers must be community-based and run by an agency knowledgeable about the local community. The idea of regionalizing senior centers – as noted in the concept paper - seems to be contradictory to ensuring culturally competent services.

Home delivered hot meals are also a vital part of what DFTA currently provides and cost should not dictate the way in which this service is administered. This program is not just about seniors receiving hot meals - it also provides daily social interaction that many elderly New Yorkers may not receive under the new proposal. We need to provide our seniors with stability and constancy and refrain from making drastic changes in their diet and daily routine. Every effort must be made to continue providing this important personal interaction.

I urge Mayor Bloomberg and the Department for the Aging to reconsider the direction we are moving with respect to providing senior services. A one-size-fits-all approach is shortsighted and won't address real concerns of an expanding senior population. Budget tightening is important in a time of economic uncertainty, but we can't balance the city's budget on the backs of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Melinda Katz  
Councilwoman, 29th District

### **Note to our elected officials:**

**If you share your advocacy in support of Queens Civic Congress, we will be happy to post it**