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January 17, 2018

New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer
David N. Dinkins Municipal Building
1 Centre Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Comptroller Stringer,

I write to urge you to conduct a management audit of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development focusing on housing lotteries. Then-New York City Comptroller John C. Liu authored an audit focusing on this topic on July 19, 2012 and I believe New Yorkers would benefit from your revisiting the topic. In addition to that 2012 report, I recognize audit reports your office has already authored that intersect with this and related issues including audit reports on HPD "Controls over the Awarding of Housing Incentive Projects" (June 2017) and HPD "Monitoring of Building Owners' Compliance with Affordable Housing Provisions and Requirements" (June 2016).

I believe the public would benefit from a follow-up audit that assesses the extent to which HPD has taken on board the 2012 recommendations, and further, an audit that reviews housing lotteries from the perspective of applicants in even greater depth.

This issue of housing lotteries and the challenges applicants face is particularly salient to me because of the uneven experiences constituents have shared. Applicants have reported to me problems with the application system that can prove frustrating, deeply discouraging, and cause them to give up on the process even after having "won" the housing lottery. For instance, applicants inform me they have faced repeated requests to submit the same or documents, insufficient explanations, or being left uninformed as to where they are in the process. I am concerned that the complaints I have received represent a part of larger, systematic problems with the housing lottery process. I believe the thorough, independent assessment you can provide can contribute to a process that meets the needs of New Yorkers.

As you know, housing lotteries represent an important, if limited, tool for preserving the diversity of neighborhoods across our City. New Yorkers benefit when we use this tool to its fullest extent, especially when considering the current housing crisis. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this letter, please feel free to contact my office at (718) 284-4700. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jesse E. Hamilton".

Jesse E. Hamilton
New York State Senator, 20th District