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SAFE AND AFFORDABLE BANKING BEGINS AT HOME: NEW YORK CITY CONNECTS EMPLOYEES TO FREE CHECKING ACCOUNTS

The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), Office of Payroll Administration (OPA) and Mayor's Office of Operations (OPS) today announced *NYC Direct Deposit*, a program to help thousands of City employees get their pay safer, cheaper and easier than ever before. With *NYC Direct Deposit*, New York City employees and other recipients of City payments can open free checking accounts and enroll in direct deposit in a few quick steps. The program is offered at Banco Popular, Carver Federal Savings Bank, Citibank, Flushing Bank, Habib American Bank, Neighborhood Trust Federal Credit Union and Sterling National Bank.

Any City employee and individual vendors such as childcare providers, foster parents and landlords who receive recurring payments from the City can sign up for the account. If enrolled in direct deposit, the account features:

- No monthly or debit card fees
- No overdraft option for debit card purchases or ATM withdrawals
- No minimum balance requirements
- Free online banking and bill pay
- Free in-network ATM withdrawals

"With a significant change in the banking landscape, many new fees are surfacing and consumers are increasingly expressing their discontent with banking options," said DCA Commissioner Jonathan Mintz. "We applaud these seven financial institutions for partnering with us to offer City employees and vendors a safe, free banking option that allows them to get their paychecks the easiest way possible and to keep every penny of those checks."

NYC Direct Deposit encourages City employees to develop meaningful and productive banking relationships and to help the almost 60,000 City employees who currently receive paper checks to enroll in direct deposit. Direct deposit reduces the need for extra trips to the bank or check casher while eliminating the problem of lost checks.

More than 825,000 adult New Yorkers do not have bank accounts but instead use fringe financial services like check cashers to pay bills, cash payroll checks, buy money orders and conduct other financial transactions. A 2008 study by DCA's Office of Financial Empowerment found that the residents of Jamaica, Queens and the Melrose section of the Bronx spent more than \$19 million a year on check-cashing fees alone.

To sign up, City employees and vendors can go to any of the participating financial institutions and ask how to open an account associated with the *NYC Direct Deposit* program. In addition to standard account opening documents, employees will be asked to show their City identification card and individual vendors will have to demonstrate they are receiving recurring payments from the City. Once the account is open, they should sign up for direct deposit online or with their agencies' payroll administrators. For more information, employees can visit nyc.gov/NYCDirectDeposit, their agency's intranet or speak with their Human Resource staff or Payroll Administrator.

DCA enforces the Consumer Protection Law and other related business laws throughout New York City. Empowering consumers and businesses to ensure a fair and vibrant marketplace, DCA licenses more than 78,000 businesses in 55 different industries. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses alike about their

rights and responsibilities. DCA's Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) is the first local government initiative in the nation with a mission to educate, empower, and protect New Yorkers with low incomes so they can build assets and make the most of their financial resources. Toward that end, OFE seeks to increase access to high-quality, low-cost financial education and counseling; improve access to income-boosting tax credits; connect households to safe and affordable banking and asset-building products and services; and enforce and improve consumer protections to enhance financial stability. For more information, call 311 or visit DCA online at nyc.gov/consumers.