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Sent: Friday, February 09, 2018 11:26 AM
To: Press (DCA)
Subject: ***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PARTNERS
HOST FIRST EVER 12-HOUR FREE TAX PREPARATION EVENT IN ALL FIVE BOROUGHES



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DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PARTNERS HOST FIRST EVER 12-HOUR FREE TAX PREPARATION EVENT IN ALL FIVE BOROUGHES

Attendees Who Earned \$54,000 Or Less In 2017 Can Have Their Taxes Filed For Free By An IRS Certified VITA/TCE Volunteer Preparer

NEW YORK, NY— Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Lorelei Salas, in collaboration with the Department of Education’s network of community schools, today announced the first ever NYC Free Tax Prep-a-Thon, a 12-hour tax filing marathon and resource fair, which will be held this Saturday, February 10 at schools in all five boroughs. From 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., attendees who earned \$54,000 or less in 2017 can have their taxes filed for free by an IRS certified VITA/TCE volunteer preparer who will help them claim deductions and tax credits. During the event, New Yorkers can take advantage of free financial counseling with a professional, financial counselor from the NYC Financial Empowerment Centers. Counselors can help filers make a plan to manage their refunds, create a budget, reduce debt and much more.

Free screening for local, state, and federal health and human service benefits will also be available to help individuals find out if they are eligible. This family friendly event will offer fun activities for kids and a resource fair for individuals to learn more about the many City resources available to all New Yorkers. Those looking to learn more about the NYC Free Tax Prep-a-Thon can visit DCA’s [event calendar](#) to find a location near them.

“Since 2015 we have helped New Yorkers file more than 425,000 returns for free and claim refund-boosting tax credits that can be pivotal in helping them pay bills, get out of debt, and save for their future,” said **DCA Commissioner Lorelei Salas**. “During the busiest time of the tax season this twelve hour event will allow us to reach even more families. We are committed to helping all hardworking families and individuals struggling to make ends meet receive every penny of their hard-earned refund. I encourage all New Yorkers to come out to our free tax prep-a-thon to file their taxes and take advantage of free financial counseling, benefits screenings, and other City resources and services.”

Throughout the tax season, NYC Free Tax Prep includes more than 200 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)/Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) and AARP Tax-Aide sites citywide, as well as online self-preparation at nyc.gov/taxprep. New Yorkers can call 311 or visit nyc.gov/taxprep and use DCA’s interactive map to search for the most convenient free tax site, and text “Taxes” to 42033 (message and data rates may apply) to find the nearest location and

receive tax season updates and reminders. A [checklist](https://nyc.gov/taxprep) of what is needed to file is available at nyc.gov/taxprep.

The City's free tax filing options:

- For most sites, New Yorkers with an annual income of \$54,000 or less with children or \$30,000 or less without children, can visit one of more than 200 free tax sites in the five boroughs. At the sites, returns can be prepared in-person by an IRS certified VITA/TCE volunteer preparer or dropped-off to be completed by the preparer. At the convenient drop-off sites, filers can drop off their tax documents and return later to pick up the completed return or receive it by email.
- New Yorkers earning less than \$66,000 can file their taxes online for free at nyc.gov/taxprep. The City partners with Intuit Financial Freedom Foundation and MyFreeTaxes, powered by H&R Block and in partnership with United Way Worldwide, to offer these services.

“For years, DCA has helped countless New Yorkers by providing free resources during tax season,” said **Public Advocate Letitia James**. “This year, with the creation of the NYC Free Tax Prep-a-Thon, they are expanding on these critical services with free tax filings, financial counseling, and many other resources that will ultimately save our residents valuable time and money. I applaud Commissioner Salas and DCA for their commitment to ensuring all New Yorkers have the supports they need during this often stressful and confusing time.”

“Tax season is one of the most stressful times of year for most people,” said **Council Member Rafael Espinal, Chair of the Committee on Consumer Affairs**. “I applaud DCA for continuing its mission of educating and empowering New Yorkers during tax season so they can make the most of their refund. I urge New Yorkers to attend this unique NYC Free Tax Prep-a-Thon!”

“During this tax season, it is critical that Brooklynites from every socioeconomic background have access to comprehensive financial resources,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**. “As such, I commend DCA for leading on the first-ever NYC Free Tax Prep-a-Thon. At Brooklyn Borough Hall, I’m proud to host a series of financial education and empowerment workshops as well as free tax preparation and filing services. Free financial counseling and filing is an invaluable tool that will empower Brooklyn residents to complete their tax forms correctly, while also expanding awareness of the many tax benefits and social services available.”

“It’s unfair and frankly maddening that in the 21st century, filing your tax return remains complicated, expensive, or both for so many people – but it’s phenomenal that our Department of Consumer Affairs and community partners are making it easier for so many New Yorkers,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “I urge every New Yorker: find out if you qualify for free tax prep help and if you do, take advantage!”

“This free tax preparation event is an effective method to help poor and low income families save money and time,” said **Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr.** “I thank DCA and DOE for their efforts to help our citizens, and I encourage all residents from The Bronx and across the city to take advantage of this event.”

“NYC Free Tax Prep offers a free and easy way for eligible New Yorkers to take advantage of all the tax-saving benefits available to them, including the Earned Income Tax Credit,” said **Queens Borough President Melinda Katz**. “By using NYC Tax Prep to minimize their tax burdens and maximize their refunds, New Yorkers will be able to use more of their hard earned money to support their families and save for the future. Mayor de Blasio and the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs, led by Commissioner Lorelei Salas, deserve to be commended for offering this citywide service.”

“This is a great opportunity for Staten Islanders to not only get help filing their taxes, but also start planning for the future,” said **Staten Island Borough President James Oddo**. “I encourage all eligible residents to take advantage of this free service, which may even help them get money back in their pockets.

“I thank my colleagues at the Department of Consumer Affairs for bringing important no cost tax prep services to the people of New York,” said **Council Member Vanessa Gibson**. “Though often perceived as daunting, tax season presents an important opportunities for low and moderate income people to receive money back from the government. It is important that all residents take advantage of the many tools available to them, especially those making under \$54,000, who can receive expert tax services for free. I thank DCA Commissioner Lorelei Salas and her staff for helping the residents of District 16 with an opportunity to successfully navigate tax season and build their savings for themselves and their families.”

“Tax preparation fees can often take you by surprise if you're unfamiliar with the process, so free preparation events can provide needed relief for low-income earners, as well as serve as a good way to inform the public about what to expect in future filings,” said **Council Member Peter Koo**. “Thank you to the Department of Consumer Affairs for arranging this full-day tax preparation marathon. I encourage everyone eligible to visit Flushing High School to take advantage of these valuable financial counseling services.”

“This is a wonderful opportunity not just to file taxes, but also to receive guidance on how to take care of your financial wellbeing for the long run,” said **Council Member Stephen Levin**. “I’m proud that my district is hosting an event and I encourage everyone to come out and take advantage and get the most out of our financial services. I would like to thank the NYC Department of Consumer Affairs for expanding this vital program which has already proven itself very popular in the 33rd City Council District.”

“Tax season can be a very frustrating time for New Yorkers, causing them to seek help from paid preparers who often charge unforeseen fees or interest, resulting in smaller refunds for hardworking families,” said **Council Member Bill Perkins**. “However, NYC Free Tax Prep allows New Yorkers the opportunity to file their taxes for free and claim vital tax credits using a safe and accessible service. I applaud the Department of Consumer Affairs for this year’s expansion of NYC Free Tax Prep, and look forward to the resources my constituents can take advantage of at this weekend’s NYC Free Tax Prep-a-Thon.”

“Tax season is here, and with tax season comes a host of city resources to help New Yorkers,” said **Council Member Debi Rose**. “You can not only have your returns prepared and filed, but also receive financial counseling, screening for benefits and more. I hope my constituents take advantage of this year’s Tax Prep-a-Thon at Curtis High School this Saturday.”

This year the City’s network of free tax preparation providers has opened 20 new sites, with new locations in every borough, in an effort to better serve New Yorkers in communities identified as being in need of free tax preparation services and likely eligible for tax credits. Among the neighborhoods receiving new sites are Eastchester and Claremont in the Bronx; Downtown Brooklyn, Sunset Park and East New York in Brooklyn; Harlem in Manhattan, Elmhurst and Corona in Queens, and the North Shore of Staten Island. Many of these sites are opening in collaboration with other City agencies, including NYC Health + Hospitals and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) through their Cornerstone program sites. DCA is also collaborating with the city’s library systems and other City agencies to make it easier for library patrons and other computer lab users to access the NYC Free Tax Prep’s self-prep service online.

DCA would like to alert New Yorkers that due to federal law, [the PATH Act](#), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is required to hold refunds until February 15, 2018 for filers who claim EITC or the Additional Children Tax Credit (ACTC). Most refunds will then be issued in approximately 21 days from mid-February, which is almost three times as long as previous years. As a result, paid preparers are marketing “express refund advances” or “refund transfers” that result in a smaller refund, or unforeseen fees or interest. Consumers using a paid preparer should ask the preparer for a [Consumers’ Bill of Rights Regarding Tax Preparers](#) (also available in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian and Spanish) and read it thoroughly before having their taxes prepared, and also get DCA’s [Tips Regarding Tax Preparers](#).

For more information about NYC Free Tax Prep, visit nyc.gov/taxprep or call 311. You can also text “Taxes” to 42033 (message and data rates may apply) to find the nearest location and receive tax season updates and reminders and join the [#FreeTaxPrep](#) conversation on @NYCDCA’s social media channels.

The NYC Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) protects and enhances the daily economic lives of New Yorkers to create thriving communities. DCA licenses more than 81,000 businesses in more than 50 industries and enforces key consumer protection, licensing, and workplace laws that apply to countless more. By supporting businesses through equitable enforcement and access to resources and, by helping to resolve complaints, DCA protects the marketplace from predatory practices and strives to create a culture of compliance. Through its community outreach and the work of its offices of Financial Empowerment and Labor Policy & Standards, DCA empowers consumers and working families by providing the tools and resources they need to be educated consumers and to achieve financial health and work-life balance. DCA also conducts research and advocates for public policy that furthers its work to support New York City’s communities. For more information about DCA and its work, call 311 or visit DCA at nyc.gov/dca or on its social media sites, [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).