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MAYOR BLOOMBERG AND CLERGY LEADERS FROM ACROSS THE CITY LAUNCH NEW PROGRAM TO HELP CITY CLERGY PROVIDE FINANCIAL EDUCATION TOOLS TO NEW YORKERS

"Pass It On" Campaign Will Help Faith Leaders in All Five Boroughs Educate Their Communities about the City's Financial Education Network

With Economy in Decline, Today's Announcement is Part of a Series of Initiatives to Help New Yorkers Weather the Storm

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs, [Consumer Affairs](#) Commissioner Jonathan B. Mintz and clergy leaders from across the City today launched the "Pass It On" campaign, an initiative targeted to help the City's faith leaders provide financial information and guidance to the members of their communities. The Department of Consumer Affairs' [Office of Financial Empowerment](#) (OFE) initiative will advise faith leaders about the many free and low-cost financial education resources available through the City's Financial Education Network and encourage them to pass the information on to their congregants to help them strengthen their financial well-being during the current economic downturn. Faith leaders collaborating with OFE will be equipped with the City's Financial Empowerment Toolkit for Faith Leaders, a new packet of financial information. They will also be given "Pass It On" cards to distribute among their congregants, encouraging them to call 311 or visit OFE's Web site available through www.nyc.gov to get help taking control of their finances, and to pass it on to others who may need assistance. According to a Neighborhood Financial Study conducted by OFE last year, New Yorkers reported that faith leaders are one of the most trusted sources of information when making financial decisions. With the economy on the decline, today's announcement is part of a series of initiatives announced by the Bloomberg Administration to help more New Yorkers stretch their paychecks further and weather the storm. The Mayor was joined at the announcement by Edward Cardinal Egan, Rabbi Yechezkel Pikus, Imam Shamsi Ali, and more than 40 other clergy leaders from all five boroughs.

"In these tough times, many New Yorkers are seeking financial advice from the people they trust, and we know a great number turn to their clergy," said Mayor Bloomberg. "By working in collaboration with churches, synagogues and mosques throughout the City, we will be able to reach thousands of individuals who might not otherwise have turned to the City for help. The new 'Pass It On' campaign will further expand the reach of our Financial Education Network and serves as a reminder that we are all in this together and that we have a responsibility to help each other as much as possible."

"The City's many dedicated faith leaders are perfect partners to help us get the word to New Yorkers about the many free and trustworthy financial education and counseling options available in every borough," said Consumer Affairs Commissioner Jonathan Mintz. "New Yorkers are facing everyday financial challenges and we really can help them take control."

"These are difficult and uncertain times, and many New Yorkers are hurting," said Edward Cardinal Egan. "As it has done for more than two centuries, the Archdiocese of New York continues to extend a caring hand to those in need, particularly through our well-respected schools, healthcare institutions, and Catholic Charities. This is essential because every human being is made in the image and likeness of God; and accordingly, every human being in need has a call on our compassion and care. The Archdiocese looks forward to collaborating with the City of New York and private agencies as well in the hope that we can make available to our fellow citizens the assistance they need and deserve."

"During times of crisis, people often rely on their religious leaders for advice - spiritual and financial," said Rabbi Yechezkel Pikus. "Now with the City's assistance, we will be better able to help people make the right economic choices and point them to expert services. Our work together here today to overcome our current economic challenges is a fitting reminder during a time of year in which people of Jewish faith remember that no odds are ever insurmountable."

"Financial hardship can seem daunting and overwhelming to families," said Imam Shamsi Ali. "But through this partnership, the information given and the hope that it instills will make a world of difference. As long as we all pull together and continue to help one another, we will come out of these tough times stronger than ever before."

As part of the "Pass It On" campaign, OFE will train hundreds of faith leaders of all denominations about the City's financial empowerment resources and services. Faith leaders will learn basic information and tips to share with those in financial distress, and learn where to refer congregants for more in-depth counseling and financial education. Participating clergy members receive a toolkit of materials that detail how to manage debt, find financial counseling or classes, and become more savvy consumers. Clergy partners will "pass it on," distributing materials from the toolkit within their faith communities by adding the information to bulletins and newsletters, and encouraging congregants, during meetings and services, to use the City's resources.

The City will also host financial literacy workshops at participating congregations to provide basic budgeting, banking and debt management information as part of the Citywide "Take Control" public awareness campaign about debt, announced by the Mayor in October as part of the City's 18 initiatives to help New Yorkers face current economic challenges. These workshops will be led by OFE Staff and members of OFE's Financial Education Network, a group of 157 community-based organizations that provide free and low-cost financial education, workshops and counseling throughout New York City. All New Yorkers can locate the Network's services in OFE's Financial Education Network Directory by calling 311 or visiting www.nyc.gov. City residents can locate services in the directory in 15 languages by borough and topics, including debt and credit concerns, money management and budgeting, housing assistance, and banking services.

OFE is the first local government initiative in the nation aimed expressly at educating, empowering, and protecting those with low incomes, so they can build assets and make the most of their financial resources. OFE is the first program to be implemented under the Center for Economic Opportunity as part of Mayor Bloomberg's aggressive efforts to fight poverty in New York City.

DCA enforces the Consumer Protection Law and other related business laws throughout New York City. Ensuring a fair and vibrant marketplace for consumers and businesses alike, DCA licenses more than 60,000 businesses in 55 different categories. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses about their rights and responsibilities. For more information, call 311 or visit www.nyc.gov.