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## **MAYOR DE BLASIO AND FIRST LADY MCCRAY ANNOUNCE APPOINTMENT OF NEW MEMBERS TO COMMISSION ON GENDER EQUITY**

**NEW YORK** – Mayor Bill de Blasio and First Lady Chirlane McCray today announced the appointment of six new members to the City’s Commission on Gender Equity, an agency tasked with supporting City agencies in dismantling institutional barriers for women, girls, and New Yorkers of all gender identities and expressions.

The new members bring a wide array of experience across various industries to the Commission, including advocacy, fundraising and communications skills across the nonprofit, government and corporate sectors, among others. The new members are:

- **Chitra Aiyar**, Executive Director at Sadie Nash Leadership Project
- **Council Member Diana Ayala**
- **Andrea Hagelgans**, Executive Vice President, Group Head for Public Affairs and Issue Advocacy at Edelman New York
- **Robina Niaz**, Founder and Executive Director of Turning Point for Women and Families
- **Arva Rice**, President and CEO of the New York Urban League
- **Council Member Carlina Rivera**

“We can’t be the fairest big city if we don’t make sure all New Yorkers – regardless of gender – can live up to their full potential,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “These new members will bring invaluable expertise to the Commission and help us strengthen opportunities for all who self-identify as women in New York.”

“As we welcome six new members to the Commission on Gender Equity we also welcome their wealth of experience, energy and commitment,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray, co-chair for the Commission on Gender Equity**. “With their leadership, the Commission will continue its important work of protecting the economic and reproductive rights of women, girls and gender-non conforming New Yorkers.”

“The Commission on Gender Equity helps support women, girls and all who identify as female, which is so important in the times we live in. Council Members Diana Ayala and Carlina Rivera are model public servants and inspirations to women all over this city, which is why I am proud to appoint them to the CGE,” said **Council Speaker Corey Johnson**. “I look forward to seeing

them work alongside First Lady Chirlane McCray, Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo, Council Member Helen Rosenthal, the Council's Deputy Chief of Staff for Legislation and Policy Laura Popa and the entire Commission in promoting gender equity across the city and helping female New Yorkers reach their full potential."

"I'm thrilled to welcome our new Commissioners, whose guidance and leadership will be indispensable as we work to ensure the sustainability of gender equitable practices and policies throughout New York City," said **Jacqueline Ebanks, Executive Director of the City's Commission on Gender Equity**.

"I am excited to welcome the new Commissioners. Their rich experience and diverse backgrounds will enhance the work the Commission has been doing in advancing women," said **Silda Palerm, Co-Chair of the Commission on Gender Equity**.

The Commission on Gender Equity develops and supports policies that promote opportunities for cisgender and transgender women and girls in all areas, including employment, housing, childcare, education, health and reproductive justice, criminal justice, and public safety. It advises the Mayor and City Council on initiatives and methods to reduce gender-based inequality.

"At this particular moment in our political history, there's no place I'd rather be than in a room filled with smart committed leaders in New York City committed to dismantling gender-based barriers," said **Chitra Aiyar, Executive Director, Sadie Nash Leadership Project**. "I'm thrilled to be joining the Commission on Gender Equity and look forward to diving into the work to make New York City a role model for the nation."

"I am honored to have been appointed to the City's Commission on Gender Equity. Women are catalyzing essential change in our political arena and I am thrilled to support these efforts through my capacity as a member of the Commission. I would like to thank Speaker Johnson for appointing me and I look forward to working alongside my fellow members," said **Council Member Diana Ayala**.

"We are at an inflection point in our society to address pressing economic and social injustices that continue to hold women and girls back from reaching their full potential. When our national leaders waiver in their support for women's voices, it becomes even more critical for Cities to lead," said **Andrea Hagelgans, Executive Vice President for Public Affairs at Edelman New York**. "One of my proudest moments in the administration was when Mayor de Blasio signed the Executive Order creating paid parental leave for New York City employees. I am excited to partner with First Lady Chirlane McCray and other City leaders to think creatively about policies to ensure that women's opinions and experiences are heard and valued."

"At this critical time in our country women are simultaneously leading in ways we have never lead before while our basic rights are being attacked on every side," said **Arva Rice, President and CEO of the New York Urban League**. "In order to make sure the tide turns in the favor of dismantling discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, efforts like CGE must be successful. I am thrilled to join this group of committed women in work to create policy, programs and recommendations for women and girls to reach their full potential."

“I am honored to be appointed to the Mayor’s Commission on Gender Equity and look forward to working with CGE in its efforts to address and reduce institutional barriers that affect survivors of gender based violence,” said **Robina Niaz, Founder and Executive Director of Turning Point for Women and Families**. “Together, we will put in place policies that ensure the full safety and security of women, girls and gender non-conforming folks across the board, and educate New Yorkers on the various inequities affecting women of color.”

“I want to thank Speaker Johnson for appointing me to the Mayor’s Commission on Gender Equity,” said **Council Member Carlina Rivera, Co-Chair of the Council’s Women’s Caucus**. “I’m honored to join a group of such fierce and inspiring New York women who are working to break down the divisions and barriers that keep so many women from succeeding and expressing themselves. From housing and child care to public safety, we must address issues of gender inequity across the board, particularly for women of color who face unique challenges in our city.”

The 32-member permanent advisory commission was formed by Executive Order in 2015, and was codified as Local Law 67 in September 2016. The Mayor and City Council Speaker each make appointments to the commission.

“Despite the many gains that women in various professions have made, there continue to be entrenched attitudes that undermine women’s efforts to be equal in society,” said **Assembly Member Deborah J. Glick**. “That we have to re-litigate the basic tenet that a woman should have full control over her own body demonstrates how far we still have to go. The scourge of domestic violence continues, but focusing on women will not solve a problem that seems to be rooted in the inability of men to respect women as equals. These inequities need to be addressed through systemic policy changes, and I commend the City for making a commitment to do that work. The commission has a long road to travel, and I wish them well.”

“Together, the six new appointees to the City’s Commission on Gender Equity will lead New Yorkers into a new day where people of all genders are treated equally and with respect,” said **Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal, Chair of the Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse**. In these difficult times when women’s and trans rights are under assault, it is vital that New York reaffirm its commitment to gender equity and by implementing policies that honor and celebrate our differences. I look forward to working closely together with these fine Commissioners, and particularly my colleagues in government who are superbly qualified to the task at hand, to make New York the most egalitarian city in the country.”

“I commend Mayor de Blasio and First Lady Chirlane McCray for the Commission on Gender Equity and the appointment of its newest members to fulfill the mission of dismantling institutional barriers for New York’s women and girls regardless of gender identity and expression,” said **Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright**. “It is critical that we support equity and bolster the opportunities for women and girls to access employment, housing, childcare, education, health, reproductive justice and safety.”

“I am thrilled to welcome the six new Commissioners to the Commission on Gender Equity, including my colleagues, Council Members Carlina Rivera and Diana Ayala. It is critical that we have a diverse range of voices and perspectives working to address the needs of women and combatting gender inequality in New York City,” said **Laurie A. Cumbo, Council Majority Leader**.

“As co-chair of the New York City Council Women’s Caucus, I offer my heartiest congratulations to the new members of the City’s Commission on Gender Equity. Collectively, they exemplify a tremendous commitment to equal opportunity and social justice, and to advancing and strengthening the voices of women and persons of other gender identities. I greatly look forward to working with the Commission to combat gender-based inequity in New York City in all its forms,” said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**.

“The goal of true gender equity is one we must continue to work towards,” said **Council Member Margaret S. Chin**. “As we face a Federal Administration increasingly hostile to the very idea of equity, it is imperative that New York City take the lead. I have no doubt that the six new appointees to the Commission on Gender Equity, including my fierce colleagues Council Members Rivera and Ayala, will rise to the challenge and break down the barriers for women, girls, and New Yorkers of all gender identities.”

#### **About the New Members of the Commission on Gender Equity:**

**Chitra Aiyar** is the executive director at Sadie Nash Leadership Project. Previously, she was a staff attorney for the African Services Committee in New York. Chitra was born in the United States to parents who emigrated from South India. Receiving both BA and BS degrees with distinction from the University of California at Berkeley, Aiyar received a JD from New York University in 2004. She has recently worked on a Hurricane Katrina reconstruction project at the Brennan Center for Justice. She intends a life in law as an advocate for the poor.

**Council Member Diana Ayala** has worked for nearly two decades serving the people of the 8th District, including the El Barrio/East Harlem, Mott Haven, Highbridge, Concourse, Longwood and Port Morris neighborhoods. She is a passionate advocate on issues including housing, gun violence, and senior services. Ayala was born in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, and moved to New York City with her family as a child. Growing up in public housing after a time in the shelter system, she experienced numerous challenges that would help give her a unique voice and perspective in government and politics, and drive her passion for public service. In her current capacity, Ayala has been instrumental in crafting legislation that has become law, from expanding tenants’ rights to cracking down on the sale of synthetic marijuana (K2).

**Andrea Hagelgans** is the executive vice president, group head for Public Affairs and Issue Advocacy in Edelman’s New York office. Hagelgans served as the highest-ranking communications professional and one of the highest-ranking women in Mayor Bill de Blasio’s administration. As senior advisor for strategic planning, Hagelgans reported directly to the Mayor and oversaw all communications for the office. Hagelgans has also worked as a communications consultant and as a senior strategist for Planned Parenthood Federation of America and its affiliates, where she helped lead the successful efforts against attempts to defund

the health care organization. She previously served on the Board of Directors of New York Common Pantry, a service organization dedicated to reducing hunger throughout New York City while promoting dignity and self-sufficiency. She holds a master's degree in political science from Columbia University in New York City and a Bachelor of Arts from Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

**Arva Rice** is President and CEO of the New York Urban League (NYUL) an organization whose mission is to enable African Americans and other underserved communities to secure a first class education, economic self-reliance and equal respect of their civil rights through programs, services and advocacy. Prior to joining NYUL, she served as the Executive Director of Project Enterprise, an organization that provides business loans, and technical assistance to entrepreneurs. Rice is a graduate of Northwestern University, Commissioner for the NYC Equal Employment Practices Commission, a member of the Women's Forum and the Greater New York Chapter of The Links Incorporated.

**Robina Niaz** worked with various mainstream non-profit organizations for over 12 years before founding Turning Point for Women and Families in 2004, the first non-profit in New York City to address domestic violence in the Muslim community. A survivor, social worker, an activist and a fierce advocate of Muslim women's rights, Niaz has spoken extensively against domestic violence locally, nationally, and internationally, and has received numerous honors, awards and fellowships. She has served on numerous boards including Sakhi, Queens Women's Network, Coalition for Battered Women's Network and the Muslim Consultative Network. Born and raised in Pakistan, Robina has an M.S in Applied Psychology (Pakistan) and an MSW from Hunter College. She speaks four South Asian languages.

**Council Member Carlina Rivera** represents the 2nd Council District which includes the diverse neighborhoods of the East Village, Flatiron, Gramercy Park, Rose Hill, Kips Bay, Murray Hill and the Lower East Side. During her time in the Council, Rivera has already introduced and passed legislation related to sexual harassment, immigration, criminal justice reform, affordable housing, small business survival, and bicycle safety. Rivera was born and raised in the 2nd District of Lower Manhattan by a single mother who emigrated from Puerto Rico. She began her career in afterschool programming, working with children at some of New York City's highest-needs schools. She went on to serve her local community, creating and organizing initiatives for seniors and homeless New Yorkers as Director of Programs and Services at Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES), a local non-profit focused on social justice.

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