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MAYOR DE BLASIO SIGNS LEGISLATION TO CREATE OFFICE OF CIVIL JUSTICE

NEW YORK—Mayor de Blasio today signed into law six pieces of legislation – Intro. 736-A, in relation to creating an Office of Civil Justice; Intro. 511-A, in relation to requiring the Department of Education to report annually on student demographics; Intro. 440-A, in relation to health services in city correctional facilities; Intro. 198-A, in relation to side guards; Intro 315-A, in relation to a truck route compliance study; and Intro. 641-A, in relation to a comprehensive study regarding pedestrian and bicyclist safety on truck routes.

The first bill, Intro. 736-A, requires the creation of an Office of Civil Justice, to be headed by a Civil Justice Coordinator and operated by the Human Resources Administration. The CJC will report to the Mayor and the Council on an annual basis on the civil legal service needs of low-income city residents – including but not limited to matters concerning housing, health insurance, medical expenses and debts, personal finances, employment, immigration, public benefits, and domestic and family matters – and on the availability of free and low-cost civil legal services to meet such needs. The CJC will also be required to make recommendations on the expansion of free and low-cost civil legal services programs, mediation programs, and other mechanisms that can assist low-income city residents with their civil legal service needs. The bill also requires the CJC to prepare a plan for providing these free or low-cost civil legal services to low-income New Yorkers who need such services. The plan is due within one year of the first civil legal services need report and will be updated every five years thereafter. This bill was passed during the Stated Meeting on May 27.

“Civil case judgments can result in the loss of a home, a country, or even a family member – and without the necessary legal services and guidance, many New Yorkers find themselves navigating these potentially life-altering cases alone,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “The Office of Civil Justice will be a critical tool in ensuring that the civil legal needs of all New Yorkers are sufficiently met, and is an important step toward fixing the imbalance between those who can afford adequate civil counsel and those forced to face difficult legal issues without the help of an attorney. I want to thank Speaker Mark-Viverito for her leadership, and Council Member Levine for sponsoring this legislation.”

"From making our streets safer to increasing access to legal counsel for all New Yorkers, the Council is proud of the positive impact these laws will have for all who live in our city," said

Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. “Enhancing access to a lawyer will help all New Yorkers receive justice in our civil court system. As we also continue to address the need for serious reform of our city’s jails, requiring increased transparency regarding healthcare provided to inmates at Rikers Island is another important step for improving New York City. Regardless of who is responsible for administering health services to inmates, the Council takes its role in providing oversight seriously and will continue to work with the de Blasio administration to address problems within the system.”

“The Office of Civil Justice will provide much needed legal services to New Yorkers who cannot afford to hire a lawyer to defend them in court. When low-income New Yorkers are forced to fend for themselves during high stakes proceedings, they are fighting on a profoundly uneven playing field that falls short of any reasonable standard of justice. This legislation will move New York closer to the day when no one in our city faces eviction, deportation or any other life-altering judgments, alone without representation. I applaud the leadership of Speaker Mark-Viverito, and the commitment of Mayor Bill de Blasio to expand access to justice to all New Yorkers,” said **Council Member Mark Levine.**

“Today we recognize that civil proceedings, which include child custody, deportation and eviction proceedings, can have as great an impact on someone's life as a criminal proceeding,” said **Council Member Rory I. Lancman, Chair of the Courts & Legal Services Committee.** “The Office of Civil Justice will help us understand the legal representation needs of New Yorkers and ensure our civil legal services funding is effective.”

The second bill, Intro. 511-A, requires the Department of Education to report annually on student demographics and DOE’s efforts to encourage diversity in city schools. DOE will report on the demographics of students in grades K-12, and on the number of students who receive special education services, are English language learners, receive free or reduced lunch, reside in temporary housing, and, for students in K-8, attend school out of their community school district. These numbers will be disaggregated by grade level, race or ethnicity, gender, and ELL status, and the report will also include demographic information for students enrolled in the pre-K program. DOE will additionally be required to report on steps taken during the preceding school year to encourage diversity in its schools and special programs. This bill was passed during the Stated Meeting on May 27. In his remarks, the Mayor thanked the bill’s sponsor, Council Member Lander.

“New York City’s remarkable diversity is one of our greatest strengths, but we are failing to bring that diversity into our schools,” said **Council Member Brad Lander.** “Sixty years after the Supreme Court ruled that ‘separate but equal is inherently unequal,’ it is deeply distressing to have a school system that is among the most segregated in the country. Fortunately, there are strategies being advanced by educators, parents, and advocates that can take us in the right direction. With the School Diversity Accountability Act in place, NYC will have a meaningful framework to promote inclusion and advance diversity in our public schools and districts -- and to evaluate whether or not we are moving in the right direction. Thanks to Mayor de Blasio for signing this bill into law today, and to Speaker Mark-Viverito, Chair Dromm, Council Member Torres, Council Member Barron, and my colleagues for supporting it through the Council, and to the NYC Department of Education for working with us on the detailed reporting requirements of the new law. When these efforts succeed, all students benefit – we end up with more inclusive

schools, a wider range of experience and perspective, and a diverse environment more like the world we live in and the democracy we want.”

The third bill, Intro 440-A, requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to submit a report every three months to the Mayor and Council Speaker detailing the health of inmates in city correctional facilities during the previous quarter. DOHMH is required to issue the first report no later than July 15, 2015, and every three months thereafter. The report will be required to include, but would not be limited to, the following available information: performance indicators reported to DOHMH by the entity providing services, methodology used to measure performance indicators, which metrics were used to determine whether performance indicators meet targets, the results of such determinations, and any actions that DOHMH has taken or plans to take in response to the data reported. If performance indicators relating to intake, follow-up care, patient safety, preventable hospitalizations, or preventable errors in medical care are reported to DOHMH, the department will be required include such data in the report. This bill was passed during the Stated Meeting on May 27. In his remarks, the Mayor thanked the bill’s sponsor, Council Member Johnson.

The fourth bill, Intro. 198-A, requires the installation of side guards on all city trucks and trade waste haulers in order to ensure safer streets. All large vehicles in the city’s fleet, and all trade waste hauling vehicles licensed by BIC, will be required to install side guards by January 1, 2024. There are several exceptions to this law for vehicles on which side guard installation would be impractical, including street sweepers, fire engines, and other specialized vehicles. This bill was passed during the Stated Meeting on May 27. In his remarks, the Mayor thanked the bill’s sponsor, Council Member Johnson.

“I want to thank Mayor de Blasio for signing two of my bills into law today,” said **Council Member Corey Johnson, Chair of the Committee on Health**. “By requiring all large vehicles in the City fleet to install sideguards, including Department of Sanitation collection trucks and City-licensed trade waste hauling vehicles weighing over 10,000 pounds, Intro. 198 will save lives. It is my hope that with our City’s leadership, side guards will be recognized as critical lifesaving tools and finally become a standard in the United States. Intro. 440, by ensuring that performance data from healthcare providers in New York City jails is reported to the city and made available to the public, will increase transparency in our jails and help us ensure that the incarcerated are receiving proper medical treatment. I also want to thank my colleagues in the City Council for their partnership on these important pieces of legislation.”

“Though 2014 marked a watershed moment for our city in reducing the amount of pedestrian fatalities, it also showed a 15 percent increase in the number of cyclists falling victim to our roadways. By requiring side guards on all city vehicles and private sanitation vehicles – the same type of vehicle which claimed the life of Hoyt Jacobs, the first cyclist to die in 2015 – we are taking the necessary steps to reverse these trends and achieve Vision Zero,” said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Chair of the Committee on Transportation**. “With this legislation, New York City becomes a national leader, installing side guards not only on the largest city fleet in the nation but also on private sanitation vehicles which claim the lives of too many. I am proud of the work my colleagues Council Member Johnson and Council Member Ferreras and I have done and am excited to see New York take the lead regarding truck safety.”

The last two bills, Intro. 641-A and Intro. 315-A, require the Department of Transportation to complete a study regarding pedestrian and cyclist safety on truck routes and a study on truck route compliance. Intro. 641-A requires DOT to investigate the number of crashes involving pedestrians and cyclists in the last five years, and review and make recommendations on the strategies and policies used to ensure safety on truck routes. Intro. 315-A requires DOT to conduct a study of compliance of truck routes, and use the results of the study to take measures to increase compliance, including converting two-way streets to one-way streets, and increasing signage, education, and outreach to the trucking community. These bills were passed during the Stated Meeting on May 27. In his remarks, the Mayor thanked the bills' sponsors, Council Members Chin and Vallone.

"It's time for our city to reexamine its transportation policies when it comes to encouraging heavy thru-traffic on streets used by pedestrians and bicyclists," said **Council Member Margaret Chin**. "In my district, we have already seen too many fatal collisions. I thank the Mayor for signing this important legislation, which will enable our city to take a systemic look at the underlying transportation policies in our city and develop new strategies to improve safety and save lives in our neighborhoods."

"How many times have we heard that residential streets are supposed to be residential? Unfortunately, as the DOT attempted to beautify neighborhoods by avoiding negative signage, we have ended up instead with trucks and tractor trailers barreling down our residential streets, polluting our communities with fumes and noise and endangering residents," said **Council Member Paul A. Vallone**. "I am proud to have passed this legislation that is a huge win for the safety and quality of life of thousands and I trust that the measures taken as a result of my bill will go a long way to combat this issue. I applaud my fellow Council Members for unanimously voting to pass my bill and Mayor de Blasio for signing it into law today."

"Trucks, in order to avoid tolls and traffic use alternative routes, are clogging up neighborhood streets, and sometimes don't even use a neighborhood truck route. This use and abuse of our roadways must come to an end if we are to achieve Vision Zero. Our 1,000 miles of truck routes have been designated with safety in mind; avoiding places like school zones to ensure our children are safe. However, if trucks don't comply with rules then how are we supposed to achieve that intention? With Council Member Chin and I's study bill, and Council member Vallone's signage bill, we will be able to better thwart bad actors and understand the systemic issues that cause their behavior," said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, Chair of the Committee on Transportation**. "Congratulations to my colleagues and I look forward to reviewing the study in 2016 and seeing some more route compliance signage in my district."

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