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**Community Hiring is the Right Medicine for
New York City's Ailing Economy**

Legislation enabling Community Hiring leverages the City's considerable economic power to prioritize hiring and developing the skills of residents of low-income neighborhoods and other economically disadvantaged workers, putting them on a career path to more secure livelihoods and a better shot at getting into the middle class. There was a clear need for this approach before the pandemic but its value is much greater and its need more urgent considering the profound economic and health impact of COVID-19.

Community Hiring legislation empowers the City to utilize its contracting authority under the capital budget to promote the hiring of 30 percent of workers on City-funded construction projects from high-poverty communities, and ensure that a portion of them are connected to pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs that both provide the skills needed to carry out public construction work but also that will enable them to earn middle class wages and family-supporting benefits. The legislation also allows the City to establish rules that will apply to its billions of dollars a year in service contracts to promote the hiring of economically disadvantaged workers.

This legislation has the potential to help 40,000 workers a year connect to jobs with a future, putting them on a path into the middle class, and ultimately in positions not reliant on public funding. I worked with City government experts, including at the Department of Small Business Services and the Economic Development Corporation, to build up these estimates by examining the capital budget and service contract programs, determining the

labor and skill requirements to deliver those services, and applying Community Hiring provisions to construction and service contracting. On average, Community Hiring would involve about 16,000 construction workers a year and 24,000 service contract workers in a range of industries from human services, to maintenance and repair to IT services. Over the next five years, this program could help as many as 200,000 economically disadvantaged workers and residents of high-poverty communities.

Nearly three-quarters of the labor force in high poverty and COVID-impacted communities identified in preliminary Community Hiring estimates are Black or Latinx. One of the most distinctive features of the COVID-19 economic impact is that much more than during a business cycle downturn, the worker dislocation effect has been overwhelmingly concentrated among workers of color. In New York City, almost three-quarters of the workers losing jobs over the past year are Latinx, Black, Asian or mixed race, with immigrants, less-educated and young workers among those hardest-hit.

Even as jobs are starting to return with vaccinations becoming more widespread and business restrictions easing, New York City will still face a substantial jobs shortfall at the end of this year and it may take another two-three years before we return to pre-pandemic job levels. In addition, we are facing historically high levels of long-term unemployment and tens of thousands of workers who have dropped out of the labor force. Community Hiring will be an essential tool not only in re-connecting dislocated workers with good job opportunities but helping to get many of these workers onto a path to build their skills and ability to succeed in a continuously evolving economy.

Community Hiring will be implemented in conjunction with local workforce development organizations that can identify workers from the targeted communities and help connect them to appropriate training, education and support programs to ensure their success. This occurs at a time when considerable federal resources are starting to flow that will help increase needed workforce development investments, and further spur physical and social care infrastructure investments and job creation. The Community Hiring approach is incredibly timely in helping support the large-scale workforce investment so urgently needed.

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