



May 4, 2020

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Kathryn Garcia
Covid-19 Food Czar
Commissioner, New York City Department of Sanitation
125 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Garcia:

We are grateful for your work in feeding New Yorkers during this difficult time but are writing to urgently request that the City add a kosher meal option to its grab and go locations in the Bronx.

Two Shabbats have come and gone since the City first set up the kosher grab and go meal program, and the Bronx does not yet have kosher meal sites, which have been established in every other borough. According to a recent article, “[p]rior to the pandemic ... 67,000 students in New York’s Jewish day schools qualified for free or reduced-price lunch under federal guidelines, a commonly cited benchmark for financial distress.”¹ The Bronx Jewish community is not immune. A 2011 study by the UJA Federation revealed that 57% of Jewish households in the Bronx had incomes below \$50,000.² The pandemic and resulting mass unemployment can only have increased the need. Our Jewish communities cannot wait any longer.

We urge you to at once begin making kosher meals available in high need areas in the Bronx at existing NYC grab and go locations, as well as through delivery options. While some households may be able to prepare their own food, there are many others having trouble making ends meet and desperately in need of assistance. We should not be asking our Jewish neighbors to choose between adhering to the tenets of their faith and going hungry.

Assemblymember Jeffrey Dinowitz and Council Member Andrew Cohen have suggested two sites in the Northwest Bronx that would be suitable locations to add a kosher option, the Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy (MS/HS 141) and the Sheila Mencher School (PS 95). To these we would also add the

¹ Maury Litwack, “Covid-19 and the suffering left in its wake,” Jewish News Syndicate (April 29, 2020), available at <https://www.jns.org/opinion/covid-19-and-the-suffering-left-in-its-wake/>.

² Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011 Geographic Profile, UJA-Federation of New York (Jan. 2013), at 53, available at <https://www.ujafedny.org/api/assets/785690/>.

following locations in the East Bronx: PS 97 at 1375 Mace Avenue, and the Young Voice Academy of the Bronx at 800 Lydig Avenue.

We appreciate your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Alessandra Biaggi
34th State Senate District



Eliot L. Engel
16th Congressional District



Jeffrey Dinowitz
81st Assembly District



Andrew Cohen
New York City Council District 11