

Testimony of The New York Academy of Medicine to the Council of the City of New York:
Committee on Governmental Operations

Oversight – Mayor’s 2017 Management Report

Lindsay Goldman, LMSW
Director, Healthy Aging

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Good afternoon, Council Member Ben Kallos and members of the Committee on Governmental Operations. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lindsay Goldman, and I am the director of healthy aging at the New York Academy of Medicine (the Academy).

Established in 1847, the Academy continues to address the health challenges facing New York City and the world’s rapidly growing urban populations. We accomplish this through our Institute for Urban Health, home of interdisciplinary research, evaluation, policy and program initiatives; our world class historical medical library and its public programming in history, the humanities and the arts; and our Fellows program, a network of more than 2,000 experts elected by their peers from across the professions affecting health. Our current priorities are healthy aging, preventing chronic disease, and eliminating health disparities.

Since 2007, the Academy has served as the Secretariat for Age-friendly NYC, a partnership with the New York City Council and the Office of the Mayor, which works to maximize the social, physical, and economic engagement of older people to improve their health and wellbeing and strengthen communities. We use a multi-pronged, intersectoral approach developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) that includes

modifying the built environment, providing social and technological supports, and changing public policies to facilitate ongoing participation of people as they age, even in the presence of chronic conditions and care needs.¹ Through qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, feedback from older people is solicited across eight domains of city life* and used by policymakers, community leaders, and residents to make local resources, institutions, services, and amenities more livable and inclusive of people of all ages and abilities.

Age-friendly NYC works to catalyze change within the public and private sectors, as well as at the neighborhood level. The Administration convenes city agencies, including but not limited to the Departments of Transportation, Parks, Cultural Affairs, Finance, Emergency Management, Health, and Aging, to address aging-related challenges by enhancing existing activities and planning processes. These convenings resulted in the [59 Initiatives for an Age-friendly NYC](#) in 2009 and most recently, the [2017 Age-friendly NYC New Commitments for a City for All Ages](#) published in July.

To inform and complement the City's work with private industry involvement, Mayor Bloomberg appointed an Age-friendly NYC Commission in 2010, which was reappointed by Mayor de Blasio in 2015. The Commission is comprised of leaders from government (administrative and legislative) and fields including business, education, arts and culture, health care, law, architecture, and social work, and staffed by the Academy. Some of the collective improvements made by Age-friendly NYC include a reduction in senior

* WHO Eight Domains of an Age-friendly City: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; civic participation and employment; communication and information; community support and health services.

pedestrian fatalities by 16 percent, increased walkability through the addition of public seating, new programming for older people at parks, educational and cultural institutions, and a better consumer experience offered by many local businesses.

The Academy applauds the City Council's commitment to ensuring the Mayor's Management Report (MMR) is an accurate reflection of the Administration's priorities, achievements, and areas for improvement. Beginning in September 2013 and continuing through February 2014, Age-friendly NYC was included in the MMR in the "Agencies Working Together" section. The report tracked opportunities for community and civic participation, availability of public seating, and access to health and social services aligned with the 59 Initiatives for an Age-friendly NYC.

Though the current MMR has a section on "Collaborating to Deliver Results," Age-friendly NYC has not been included. While some of the collaborative initiatives, as well as the individual agency chapters, do address older New Yorkers, there are very few corresponding performance indicators beyond units of service delivered by the Department for the Aging (DFTA). DFTA services, utilized by approximately 17 percent of the City's eligible 1.4 million people aged 60 and older, are certainly critical, but are only one component of a high quality later life. The fundamental goal of Age-friendly NYC is to promote age-inclusive policies, environments, and amenities across all aspects of life, including transportation, public space and programming, housing, and public safety, to name a few. The MMR provides an opportunity to track specific, measurable outputs and outcomes indicating progress, stagnation, and inequities, which are not currently being monitored through other forms of accountability, such as OneNYC and the Department for the Aging's Annual Report.

Progress evaluation and continual improvement are core components of the age-friendly model. As one of the founding members of the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities and the recipient of the International Federation on Ageing's 2013 award for "Best Existing Age-friendly Initiative in the World," New York City is recognized as one of the leaders of a movement, which now includes over 500 localities across the world, most of which have been directly or indirectly influenced by our efforts. The City has an obligation both to older New Yorkers and to our global peers to assess and modify our interventions, as necessary and on a regular basis, to ensure optimal impact. To that end, the Academy respectfully recommends that Age-friendly NYC performance measures be reinstated in the MMR. The Academy would be pleased to leverage our expertise in evaluation, applied research, and aging and health policy to assist the Council and the Administration in identifying and operationalizing appropriate metrics for inclusion.

References

1. World Health Organization. *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide*. Geneva; 2007. http://www.nyam.org/agefriendlynyc/docs/WHO_Global_Age_friendly_Cities_A_Guide.pdf.