



**State of the City Address
City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn
Monday, February 11, 2013**

Remarks as Prepared

As my father just mentioned, it was 100 years ago this fall that my grandfather left Ireland on a boat headed for New York City.

Think of it - a man, little more than a boy.

He gets on a ship and leaves the only home he has ever known, with no real hope of returning - to go to a City he has never seen.

Why? Because that city is New York.

And he has heard story after story of its greatness and potential.

That it's a place like no other -- with opportunity for everyone, and limitless promise for anyone willing to work hard.

And he did work hard.

Like so many young immigrants, he took work wherever he could find it.

He started out in the bowels of a slaughterhouse, shoveling coal in furnaces.

It was back-breaking labor.

And he went home every night covered in ash and soot.

Then he got a job driving a trolley.

A better job, but one that meant waking long before dawn -- and arriving at the depot an hour early to make sure there would be a car for him to drive that day.

And then working double shifts - so that eventually he would be able to run his own small business and put his sons through college.

Let me ask you: where else but here could an immigrant with a third-grade education go on to become a small business owner?

My grandfather could have made his home anywhere in America.

But he knew that there was no better place than New York City to pursue his dream.

A dream not that he would own a penthouse on Park Avenue.

But that his children would have better opportunities than he did.

That's the dream of the middle class.

And through hard work he made that dream a reality for my father -- who was able to go to college himself, become a union electrical worker, marry a Catholic Charities social worker -- and together raise a family and provide even bigger opportunities for my sister and me.

Every day, as I travel the five boroughs I talk to people with those same hopes for the future, with the same incredible work ethic, and the same belief that there is no better place to be than New York City.

Their fortitude is what motivates me -- and many others in this room today -- to make sure that the promise of the middle class remains alive and well in New York City.

That young families today have the same ability that my grandfather had to chase their dreams.

That the children of New York City's teachers and firefighters and nurses never have to imagine calling anywhere else home.

That those who were devastated by Sandy can rebuild their lives in the five boroughs.

I'm incredibly proud that in the last seven years, this City Council has built a record, not of words and criticisms, but of actions and results.

We brought 3,000 good manufacturing jobs to the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Working with RWDSU and Council Member Koppell, we passed landmark legislation that will bring living wages to thousands of workers in City funded development projects.

Thanks to the leadership of Education Chair Jackson, 4,000 more families and students now have access to full day Pre-K programs each year.

Working with Council Member Steve Levin, Assembly Member Cathy Nolan, and Senator John Flanagan, we made kindergarten mandatory for every child in New York City.

And through a joint effort with Finance Chair Recchia and the UFT, we saved 4,000 teachers from layoffs that would have devastated our schools.

In tough times, we've focused on providing aid to those struggling the most.

We're currently suing the Bloomberg Administration to stop policies that make it harder for homeless New Yorkers to access shelter.

I want to thank General Welfare Chair Palma for her work on this effort.

And we helped get more than 50,000 additional New Yorkers access to food stamps.

I could go on, but in the end it's not just about the numbers, the laws, or the new programs.

It's about what we've empowered New Yorkers to do.

There's Lerida Mojica, who used our kitchen incubator at La Marquette in East Harlem to start a new business called New York Cake Pops.

In the last year her company has grown by leaps and bounds.

Her product has been featured in Martha Stewart Magazine, and now she's creating new jobs for people in the neighborhood.

Then there's Sabrina Auguste - a graduate of our GROCERYworks job training program.

When she started, she had been out of work for nearly two years, and she was relying on friends and family for housing. Through GROCERYworks, she learned the skills she needed to start on a career track in the food retail industry.

Sabrina got a job at a family owned produce market in Dyker Heights. She recently earned a raise, and is about to celebrate 18 months of consecutive employment.

Lerida's and Sabrina's story, and the stories of thousands like them – that's why I am so optimistic about the future of New York City.

We have made great strides.

But we are not satisfied.

We need to make sure everyone is on the path to a brighter future.

And that's what I want to talk about today - creating even greater opportunity for the middle class and those striving to get there.

This morning I released a report called the Middle Class Squeeze.

It puts hard data behind some national trends that have impacted both New Yorkers and people across the country.

And it explains why New York City's middle class makes up a smaller percentage of our total population than it did ten and twenty years ago.

Jobs paying middle class wages are increasingly scarce.

Unemployment rates for the middle class are the highest they've ever been at this stage in an economic recovery.

And costs are rising much faster than incomes.

Today, our top priority must be to keep our middle class here, attract new middle class families, and give every New Yorker the opportunity to enter the middle class.

So that, like my father and grandfather, they can provide a brighter future for the next generation.

To preserve and strengthen the middle class we need to create good jobs and make sure that workers have the training they need to enter the job market of the 21st century.

And we must finally start to address the costs that make New York such an expensive place to live.

Simply put, we face an affordability crisis in our city and it cuts right at the fabric of New York.

We need to make sure that the people who want to stay in our great city can afford to stay here.

We have no greater challenge or obligation to the families we represent than to tackle this problem head on and deliver results.

The future of our city depends on it.

It comes as no surprise to any New Yorker that affordable housing is at the heart of this crisis.

I've made this issue a focus throughout my entire career, since my early days as a tenant organizer.

It's also central to our competitiveness as a city.

Every time I meet with businesses owners, they tell me one of their top priorities is affordable housing, so they can attract and retain the top talent in the world.

Affordable housing is a personal issue for me as well.

I am where I am today because 70 years ago my mother's parents were able to get a rent

controlled apartment on Isham Street in Inwood.

That apartment gave them the stability that allowed them to work their way up to the middle class.

It gave them a chance to save money and send my late mother and late aunt to college.

This has always been part of the greatness of New York - that families could grow here, and people could come here from all over the world to follow a dream.

So when a couple has a second child, they can find a two bedroom apartment in their price range.

And a young artist can afford to come here and wait tables while working to become the next Picasso or Baryshnikov.

I know that with smart policy, and with New Yorkers working together, we can keep that part of our city alive.

So today I'm going to outline a four-part plan to make housing in New York City more affordable.

First, and most importantly, I'm proposing the biggest commitment to middle class affordability that this city has seen in two generations.

I have a plan to build 40,000 new middle income affordable apartments over the next ten years.

That's quadruple the current rate of middle class housing construction.

And I want to thank Council Members Comrie and Dickens for working with us to develop this proposal.

Our plan will be by far the single largest middle class housing program since Mitchell-Lama.

And we're going to layer it on top of the roughly 4,000 new units of low income housing being produced every year through Mayor Bloomberg's New Housing Marketplace Plan.

We're not going to reduce that commitment to working class housing by a single red cent.

My plan will build on it and strengthen it.

Make no mistake - this will require increased financial commitment from the city.

We will do this in three different ways.

One - Government efficiencies.

The Council and the Bloomberg administration have undergone an effort to streamline the City's back office operations.

This has led to better management of our vehicle fleet that will save us over \$40 million a year in the capital budget.

Similarly, as we upgrade our information technology systems, we've begun to achieve concrete savings that will yield at least another \$35 million a year.

These savings will grow in future years as we better manage our real estate, consolidate office space, and reduce our energy bill.

Second, we need to use every tax payer dollar we allocate in the capital budget to grow New York City.

We also need to start using our capital budget more efficiently.

Believe it or not, for the last couple of years, the Parks Department has programmed \$50 million a year for something called "miscellaneous capital projects" - money that it hasn't actually used.

These kinds of idle funds exist in other agencies as well.

If they're not going to use them, then let's put them to use where they will be used -- to build housing!

The third strategy is to borrow additional money.

This is the right move at the right time.

Interest rates and federal mortgage rates are both at an all-time low, so we can stretch our development dollars even further.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to invest in our middle class – and we're not going to let it pass us by.

We are also going to make sure we avoid the affordability mistakes we made in the past.

Mitchell-Lama was a great program.

It helped build over 100,000 middle-income rental apartments and co-ops in the 60s and 70s, at a time when most other programs could only be used to build low-income housing.

The problem is, their affordability requirements were built to sunset after 20 years.

More than 30,000 Mitchell-Lama units have already been lost, and more are being converted to market rent every day.

Just imagine. You worked hard to find an affordable apartment, and spent decades making that apartment into a home.

You raised a family, sent your children off to college.

Now you're ready to retire.

And because your building lost its affordable protections, you find yourself forced out of the place you've called home, and priced out of a neighborhood you helped to build.

This doesn't just impact the families being displaced.

It robs entire neighborhoods of the diversity that keeps them strong and vibrant.

So as the second part of our plan, I'm happy to announce that at our request, Senator Martin Golden and Assembly Member Keith Wright, Chair of the Housing Committee, have agreed to introduce the Permanent Affordability Act.

And we'll be working with Council Members Brewer and Mendez to make sure it gets passed.

The Permanent Affordability Act will allow us to give building owners a new tax exemption, by capping their property taxes at a certain percent of their rental income.

In exchange, we'll require that they keep their units affordable.

This bill will, for the first time ever, create permanent affordability for thousands of the new units that we'll build under my middle class housing construction plan.

And it will also be applied to existing units – thereby preserving affordable housing that we might otherwise have lost.

We'll have the power to renew this deal every thirty years, keeping homes affordable for as long as the buildings remain standing.

Now even if we stop the hemorrhaging of affordable apartments, some communities have already become all but out of reach for the middle class.

Well let me be clear: we're not giving up on these neighborhoods.

I refuse to accept the notion that large portions of our city are destined to become a luxury only available to the wealthiest among us.

Because it won't stop with Manhattan.

If we don't reverse that trend, Park Slope and Carroll Gardens will be next, then Astoria and

Long Island City, Throgs Neck and Saint George, and maybe one day the whole city.

So the third part of our plan is an innovative new tool that will turn existing market rate housing into affordable units.

And I want to recognize Council Members Vacca and Chin for their work on this proposal.

We are working with Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Senator Martin Golden to introduce legislation in Albany that will allow us to create a pilot program in a few targeted neighborhoods.

We'll make this offer to building owners.

You convert a number of units to affordable middle income housing.

In exchange, we'll cap your property taxes at a fixed percent of your building's rental income, lowering and stabilizing your overall costs.

It's a win for them, a win for middle class renters, and a win for the City.

This is how we retain economic diversity in neighborhoods that have become harder to reach for the middle class.

We will not allow middle class families to get priced out of the neighborhoods they helped build.

We will keep New York City what it has always been – a place where opportunity is given, not just to those who can afford to buy it, but to those willing to work for it.

Now building or adding more affordable homes won't solve all of our problems.

So the fourth and final part of our plan takes a variety of steps to make sure that all our city's housing is good enough for people to want to live and raise their families there.

We hear horror stories all the time: apartments that cost a lot for someone to rent but have fallen into disrepair.

Leaky roofs, inadequate heat, and repairs that landlords simply refuse to make.

How do we tell that teacher or construction worker to stay here – or move here – if we can't guarantee that the money they're paying for housing is money well spent?

Families who worked hard have a right to a home they can be proud of - just like my grandparents in that apartment on Isham Street.

That's why over the last seven years this City Council has done more to crack down on bad landlords than any Council in New York City history.

We passed the Safe Housing Act, which has already provided roof to cellar renovations in more than 1,000 of the city's worst buildings.

Our Tenant Protection Act for the first time gives tenants the power to sue their landlords for a pattern of harassment.

And just last month we passed legislation giving HPD unprecedented power to hold bad landlords accountable.

But fully dealing with serious housing violations requires digging even deeper.

That's why I'm proud to announce that working with Housing and Buildings Chair Dilan, we're going to undertake the first top to bottom overhaul of the city's Housing Maintenance Code since its creation.

For 50 years we've been working with a housing code that doesn't give us the right tools to force landlords to keep apartments in livable condition.

It's so inadequate, it doesn't even recognize leaking pipes as a potential problem.

So when HPD inspectors find water damage, the best they can do is issue a general violation saying the landlord needs to quote "keep the premises in good repair".

A landlord might decide to hire a team of professionals to fix the pipe and repair the plaster.

Or he might just buy a can of white paint and cover up the damage, only to see the leak come back in a week or a month.

Either way, he's brought the apartment up to code, and doesn't have to worry about paying a fine.

How are we ever going to solve this housing crisis if for every affordable unit we create, another one becomes uninhabitable?

So when we update the housing code, we're going to give building inspectors the power to tell landlords exactly what a problem is, and exactly how it needs to be corrected.

And we'll create new penalties for repeat violations - so if you keep trying to get away with a quick fix, you pay the price.

We'll open up more middle class housing, just by forcing landlords to do their jobs.

Contrary to what you might think, this idea is supported by both tenant advocates and the real estate industry.

Because it isn't about unfairly targeting landlords.

It's about taking down the slumlords that give good owners a bad name.

Now for some middle and working class New Yorkers, the quality of their housing faces a different threat.

At the height of the housing bubble, unscrupulous investors were snatching up properties all over the city hoping to turn them around for a quick profit.

Their plan was to push out residents so they could turn the buildings into luxury apartments.

And when the market crashed they walked away, leaving working class tenants to rot.

Thousands of units from Washington Heights to Bed Stuy are currently in - or on the verge of foreclosure.

When the bank puts these buildings up for auction, the future of tenants hangs in the balance.

A new wave of predatory buyers is often waiting in the wings.

While some may have been overwhelmed by this challenge, here in New York, tenants have banded together to fight back, and the City Council has been with them every step of the way.

In partnership with Mayor Bloomberg, we created a Task Force on Financially Distressed Rental Housing, chaired by Council Members Dilan, Dickens, and Palma.

And when ten buildings in the Bronx were in jeopardy, we helped pressure the lender to sell to a tenant-approved owner who will make needed repairs and keep units affordable.

And we were able to save the homes of 500 families.

Now we've actually convinced some banks to give the City a chance to purchase foreclosed buildings before they go up for auction.

But because of insufficient resources and the complexity of the city's budget process, we're not always able to move quickly enough to make these deals.

So I'm proposing that we create a Distressed Housing Preservation Fund.

This money will be used by HPD to make bulk purchases of overleveraged housing.

The city will make sure repairs get made while properties make their way through the foreclosure process.

Then we'll transfer them to an approved developer who will keep the buildings affordable and in

good condition.

Since we're buying these properties at a bulk rate, we'll be able to offer them to good developers at a price they can afford, while at least recouping our original investment.

That way we can keep resources available to buy the next group of buildings in danger of foreclosure.

The Distressed Housing Preservation fund will allow HPD to purchase as many as 400 units of housing in the first year alone.

And I want to thank Council Members Vann and Rivera for their work on this initiative.

None of this will be easy.

It will take a renewed commitment by the City to make affordable housing a reality for tens of thousands of middle class New York families.

It is a challenge, but it is one that we must and will meet.

Now rent isn't the only expense that's putting a burden on working families.

For most New Yorkers in today's economy one income is not enough to enter the middle class.

More often than not both parents need to work to make ends meet.

Inevitably that means the added cost of child care - an expense that for many families actually exceeds the cost of housing.

And it won't surprise anyone here that New York City has the highest child care costs in the country - over \$19,000 per year on average for infant care.

So if you and your spouse are fortunate enough to have housing that you can afford and two good paying jobs - the cost of caring for your young children can make you live paycheck to paycheck.

This is a central element of the affordability crisis that so many New York families face.

That's why today I am proposing that New York City create a Middle Class Child Care Tax Credit, and I am pleased that we are working with Senator Simcha Felder and Assembly Member Denny Farrell to introduce the legislation needed to make it happen.

Right now the city offers a credit only to families that make less than \$30,000 - which leaves middle class families to fend for themselves.

Our Middle Class Credit will be available to more than 90,000 additional families, anyone making up to \$150,000 a year.

It will build on existing state and federal credits - so a family with two children making \$75,000 a year will receive a total annual benefit of \$2,040.

This is real money in the pockets of middle class families.

And I want to thank Council Member Ferreras for her work on this proposal.

The second part of our strategy is making sure more New Yorkers can find jobs that pay a middle class salary, or provide a pathway to the middle class.

The study we released this morning found the city's middle class unemployment rate is 6.2%.

That's three times higher than before the economic collapse.

We need to get even more creative and aggressive in our approach to economic development.

In the last decade, Mayor Bloomberg and the NYC Economic Development Corporation have had a lot of success creating jobs by redeveloping large tracts of underutilized property.

We need to continue to capitalize on these big development opportunities.

But a good development plan requires us not only to work from the top down, but also from the bottom up.

New York has always been a city of neighborhoods - each one with different strengths, different infrastructure, and different potential.

Over the last decade we've seen nearly abandoned neighborhoods transformed into thriving centers of industry.

Look at what happened in DUMBO.

Emerging technology firms saw that it had the potential to support their businesses, and now it's become one of the hottest real estate markets in the country.

In DUMBO that process happened organically.

But with thoughtful planning and a focus on local strengths, I believe we can spark that same kind of economic resurgence in other neighborhoods around the five boroughs.

What I'm proposing is a significant reimagining of the way the City thinks about economic development.

A strategy that sees opportunity in every community.

One that works borough by borough, neighborhood by neighborhood, block by block.

It's a strategy I call "Keeping Opportunities Close to Home," KOCH because we all know how much the mayor loved to have things named after him.

It's all about looking at existing industries with room for growth, and identifying new industries that can build on neighborhood strengths.

And our first course of action will be a commitment to dramatically transforming the South Bronx.

We'll work with Borough President Diaz and Council Member Foster to better capitalize on all that the South Bronx has to offer - its infrastructure, transit hubs, roads.

Not to mention its human capital – community groups, colleges, and thousands of hard working residents.

We'll even find ways to turn problems into opportunities.

Transportation and distribution companies in the South Bronx have thousands of trucks driving in and out every day – which have created much needed jobs but have also contributed to high asthma rates.

In the next five years, many of these trucks will need to be retrofitted to meet new environmental standards and save money on fuel.

We have a chance to create hundreds of good jobs doing this green retrofitting, and the environmental and health benefits that come from reducing emissions – a win-win for residents.

We can take steps to make sure this work gets done in the South Bronx by making the neighborhood even more attractive to the clean technology companies that do this retrofitting and manufacturing.

Like renovating City-owned space for growing firms, and providing matching funds that help leverage federal and state research grants.

And working with Hostos, and Bronx Community College to provide students with the skills they need to get these cleantech jobs.

Now that's just building off of one of the strengths we see in the borough.

We can also make the Hunts Point Food Distribution Center an anchor to create more opportunities for food manufacturing companies.

And we can work with City Planning and State Senator Gustavo Rivera, to turn local Metro North stations into centers of economic activity.

We'll use the Keeping Opportunities Close to Home strategy to generate economic growth in other neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs.

Look at Sunset Park.

It contains nearly 9 million square feet of city-controlled industrial space at The Brooklyn Army Terminal, Bush Terminal, and the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal.

And much of it remains underutilized.

There's 1 million square feet of completely undeveloped space at the Army Terminal alone.

To maximize all that potential, I propose we steal a page from the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

My father was actually stationed there briefly during World War 2.

He thinks we should rename it the Larry Quinn Navy Yard.

But the Navy Yard has been a shining example of what the city can do with underused land.

For decades it sat largely unused and fell into disrepair – a lost remnant of our city's past.

But more recently, the Navy Yard has transformed itself into a vibrant piece of our economic future.

How?

The city created an independent nonprofit development corporation, and gave them control over the Navy Yard's revenue.

This allowed them to better invest in infrastructure, and other improvements to the facility.

Now the Navy Yard is thriving once again, employing 6,000 New Yorkers in good middle class jobs and creating billions of dollars in economic activity for the city.

I'm proposing that we create the same kind of development corporation to oversee operations at the terminals in Sunset Park.

It will be dedicated to increasing jobs at each site by bringing in new businesses and retaining the

ones that are there.

It will leverage investment opportunities, provide on-site job training, and create a campus environment to attract the rapidly growing innovation economy of manufacturers and tech companies in Brooklyn.

By fully utilizing all of these industrial spaces, we'll bring more than 2,000 new jobs to Sunset Park.

We'll prioritize hiring local workers for the jobs we create.

And we'll build out from these city properties, to activate other unused space throughout the neighborhood.

I want to thank Economic Development Chair Koslowitz for her work on this proposal.

So far our plan is bringing cleantech to the Bronx and manufacturing and industry to Sunset Park.

But we won't stop there.

In Western Queens we can work with Council Member Van Bramer, to make room for the 3-D printing and other high tech manufacturing firms that will spin out of the new Tech campus on Roosevelt Island.

And in Washington Heights, we can work with Council Member Rodriguez, and build off the success of Columbia's biotech incubator by helping graduates start their own biotech firms.

And let's finally take full advantage of the potential in Staten Island's many waterfront communities.

These neighborhoods are already home to tugboat companies, drydock and repair facilities, and of course, the New York Container Terminal.

Staten Island is ideally positioned to create jobs in exporting – taking the products being made in Brooklyn or the South Bronx, and shipping them to buyers all over the world.

There's tremendous untapped potential here.

New York City underperforms in exports compared to every other major metropolitan region in the country.

Governor Cuomo has been leading a charge to export more of the goods and services being produced all over the state.

Now we can build on his efforts and go even farther.

Cities that do exports well - do so because they've taken a regional approach - and developed a comprehensive strategy to help local businesses identify and access foreign markets.

And that is exactly what I propose we do for New York City.

We need to create our city's first ever Regional Export Council, which will bring together government and industry leaders from New York, New Jersey and the Port Authority.

We'll develop a comprehensive regional plan with the goal of doubling our city's exports by the year 2020.

This will create more jobs on the Staten Island waterfront, and boost sales for companies all over the city and the region.

And I want to recognize Council Members Oddo, Ignizio and Rose for their work on this initiative.

Now you can't talk about neighborhood job creation without including our small business community.

Starting your own business has been a central part of the middle class dream for so many New Yorkers.

And small businesses account for 50% of total employment in the five boroughs.

But many of our small businesses still haven't fully recovered from the recession.

Others are still reeling from Sandy's devastating impact.

Ask any small business owner and they'll tell you one of their biggest challenges is accessing capital.

Credit unions and other community lenders are there to help.

But because these financial institutions are small, the size of the loans they can offer is limited.

We don't need to create a brand new loan program.

Working with Small Business Chair Reyna, we will use city resources to help these local financial institutions stretch their dollars even farther.

I propose that we create a new pool of city capital that will act as a backstop for community lenders, empowering them to make bigger loans to new and growing businesses.

For every \$2 million the city puts up, we can guarantee as much as \$5 million in small business lending.

So an entrepreneur can access funds to rent an office and hire her first employee.

And a business hurt by Sandy can get capital to renovate its space or replenish its inventory.

Another way we'll continue to create jobs is by focusing on sectors with the most room for growth in the years ahead.

And few have more potential than the rapidly expanding health care industry.

It's an area where we've already seen some success.

Back in 2011, I announced an initiative to prepare more New Yorkers for jobs as Home Care Workers - people who deliver daily care to elderly and homebound New Yorkers.

By the end of this year, we'll have trained more than 200 people, and gotten them started on a career track.

And through an innovative partnership with CUNY, we've trained more than 100 New Yorkers to fill nursing and support staff positions in high demand.

But we've barely scratched the surface when it comes to the potential for health care jobs.

Because of federal and state policy reforms, our health care system is rapidly evolving.

We're moving to a system that focuses more on prevention and primary care, and provides a stronger network of patient services.

As a result, there's going to be major demand for new jobs like community health workers, patient navigators, and care coordinators.

These will be good paying middle class jobs, many of them unionized – with real opportunities for advancement.

Sounds great, right?

The problem is, no one has defined exactly what these new jobs entail.

New York is going to have to come up with specific job descriptions, requirements, and certification procedures.

If we get this right, it will mean thousands of new job opportunities for working and middle class New Yorkers, and more affordable and effective care for the elderly and those living with chronic disease.

If we get it wrong, we'll see major disruptions in our healthcare system, and healthcare professionals could actually lose their jobs.

So today I'm announcing a new partnership called the New York Health Employment Coalition.

It will be co-chaired by Health Committee Chair Maria del Carmen Arroyo, Kenneth Raske, President of the Greater New York Hospital Association; Deborah King, Executive Director of the 1199 SEIU Training and Employment Funds; and Bill Ebenstein, Dean of Health at CUNY.

We'll work with City and State agencies, health care organizations like the Continuing Care Leadership Coalition and the Primary Care Association, philanthropic groups, and other healthcare unions.

We'll start by focusing on the most immediate needs.

Because of State healthcare reform, thousands of home care workers who are at risk of losing their jobs because of state health reform.

In order to meet new standards for home care, they'll need additional training, and they'll have to pass more tests.

But right now the tests and textbooks are available almost exclusively in English.

So in response I am announcing that the City Council is going to provide funding to translate these materials, to meet the needs of our diverse workforce.

We'll make sure that as many as 3,000 non-English speakers keep their jobs, and patients don't lose their culturally competent home care workers.

Beyond this, the New York Health Employment Coalition will look at every corner of the health care workforce.

We'll work together to define the requirements for new positions.

We'll help education institutions develop trainings that are aligned to employer needs and new standards for quality care.

We'll create more clinical internship opportunities for entry-level workers, and see to it that jobs are waiting for them when they're done.

We're also going to target existing professions that face shortages – such as lab techs.

We know they need more certified lab space and clinical internships and we're going to help

them get it.

We'll make sure that New Yorkers from all five boroughs have access to these in demand jobs.

And we'll provide the training that existing workers need to retain their jobs, and give them even more skills so they can work their way up a career ladder to the middle class.

Not only will this create more and better job opportunities for tens of thousands of New Yorkers.

It will improve quality and reduce the cost of healthcare for families in every neighborhood.

I've talked a lot today about capitalizing on existing strengths to create more jobs for middle class New Yorkers.

Well the truth is, our people are the biggest strength we have when it comes to job creation.

Our workforce is the most important factor that attracts companies and entrepreneurs to create jobs in the five boroughs.

If New Yorkers have the right skills, the jobs will follow.

For many companies, the importance of a strong workforce has started to outweigh more traditional factors like local taxes, financial incentives, and cost of living.

In a recent meeting with my economic development team, the folks at Facebook said that workforce quality was their #1 consideration when deciding where to locate new offices.

We need to make workforce development a central component of our economic strategy.

But to put it mildly - our current system is a disjointed mess.

Eight different city agencies currently spend more than \$300 million each year on workforce development programs in New York City.

These agencies don't communicate or coordinate, and there's no standard measure of accountability for the many programs that they fund.

Some programs are just required to hit a target number of job placements, without any regard to how long people stay in a job, or whether it pays a living wage.

We've heard stories about New Yorkers spending hours training for jobs in health care that are currently being phased out.

Or people being charged money to earn a credential, only to discover that employers don't require it or even see it as valuable.

Today I'm proposing a thoroughly reinvented workforce development system to bring middle class jobs to the five boroughs.

A system that's driven by real world demand, has clearly defined metrics and goals, and rewards lasting results.

I want to thank Council Members Lappin and Fidler for their work on this initiative.

Here's how our new system will look if you're a job seeker.

Joe walks into any job center in the city.

He's immediately greeted by a trained professional who will conduct an in depth interview to assess his interests, skills, and any barriers that might prevent him from finding success in a job.

Under our new system, every center will have access to the same data – so we can tell what classes he's taken and what interviews he's been sent on.

That way we can make sure we're not duplicating our efforts and wasting his time.

Staff will have access to up to the minute labor market information, compiled by egghead economists, but based on data and conversations with real employers.

So they know exactly what kinds of companies are hiring, and what kinds of jobs are in demand.

If Joe is ready for one of those jobs today, we'll give him interview coaching and resume prep, and set him up with a prospective employer.

If he needs more specific job-related skills, he'll be enrolled in a targeted training course, to help him qualify for a good paying available job.

And once Joe gets that job, our work won't stop there. Workforce staff will check in regularly with both Joe and his employer.

We'll make sure Joe continues to have the support he needs, so he doesn't just keep that job for a month, but can turn it into a lifelong career.

We can do this.

The foundation is already in place.

There are some great programs out there right now helping New Yorkers prepare for and find good jobs.

Now we're going to make services more consistent, and use taxpayer dollars more efficiently.

By focusing our efforts on actual growing industries, and helping all job seekers get in demand skills, we'll make our overall workforce even more attractive to the employers of tomorrow.

And we'll make sure they're building good middle class jobs right here in the five boroughs.

One additional way we can use our city's workforce system is to help more young immigrants take advantage of the Deferred Action program created last year.

Thanks to President Obama, 79,000 young New Yorkers now have a chance to work legally for the first time in their lives.

But here's something you may not realize.

To qualify for Deferred Action, you either need a high school diploma, or you have to be enrolled in a GED class or other education program.

But New York City's adult education classes are way over capacity.

That means 16,000 of those young people are still at risk of deportation because they can't find a seat in an approved course.

Just imagine.

For years you've taken off the books jobs that pay less than minimum wage.

Now you're raising a family of your own.

You dream of stepping out of the shadows - of starting a career that will allow you to lift your family up to the middle class.

But because you can't get into one of these programs, that dream is about to slip through your fingers.

We can't - we won't let that happen.

Today I'm proposing the creation of a new \$13 million fund that will allow us to provide a seat in an adult ed program for every last one of these young New Yorkers.

Working with Council Members Dromm and Gonzalez, we'll make sure those programs are available in a wide range of languages, so no one gets left out.

This will help 16,000 New Yorkers get better jobs, avoid deportation, and stabilize their families.

It will help them get an education, and bring them one step closer to a middle class career.

This will build on the City Council's longstanding commitment to supporting immigrant families.

I've been proud to stand with Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez to push for passage of the DREAM Act.

And I want to thank State Senator Bill Perkins and Assembly Member Francisco Moya, for their leadership on the State DREAM Act.

And we believe that this is the year the federal government will finally pass comprehensive immigration reform, thanks to the incredible work of Senator Schumer and so many others.

By creating opportunity for these 16,000 young people, New York City will play our own part in the march towards real equality for immigrant families.

And we will send a clear message to immigrants from all over the world – we still want you and need you to come here, to continue building a stronger New York City.

Over the past week, I've found myself thinking a lot about Mayor Koch, whose loss is being felt across the five boroughs.

He was mayor at another critical moment for our middle class.

When the future of our city was in doubt, Mayor Koch restored our confidence and pulled us back from the brink of financial ruin.

Today, we face a different challenge.

Middle class families are desperate to come here and stay here, but they're finding it harder and harder to do so.

And I'm reminded of something Mayor Koch said in his first inaugural address, a call to action that rings as true today as it did more than three decades ago.

He said, "We are the trustees of a national treasure: the City of New York itself, the greatest national treasure in this country. History will hold us accountable for how well we live up to that trust."

Mayor Koch wasn't just talking about protecting New York City in a physical sense.

He was talking about the very idea of New York.

A city defined by opportunity, where people from every corner of the globe come to pursue their dreams.

A place where hard work means that you too can take part in the promise of the middle class.

That's the New York City that Mayor Koch was talking about.

And when he spoke of the trustees of the city, he didn't just mean the Mayor or the Council.

He was talking about the people - all eight and a half million of us.

New Yorkers like Lerida, who looked at the cake pops she made for family and friends – and saw a chance to build a new business and create jobs in her neighborhood.

And Sabrina, who's now on track to become manager of a neighborhood supermarket. Because she never stopped working, and climbing, and striving for a greater tomorrow.

These New Yorkers, and millions more like them.

They carry the dream passed down from generations of middle and working class families – from immigrants and lifelong New Yorkers, from my grandparents and yours.

If we in government have as much faith in the promise of our city as these New Yorkers do.

If we have the same willingness to work hard, the same commitment to making our communities a better place.

Then we will create thousands of new jobs and build thousands of new homes.

We will fight rising costs with greater opportunities.

We will keep our neighborhoods diverse and vibrant and growing.

And we will send a message to every middle and working class family, those who are here and those who dream of being here.

New York was, New York is, and New York will always be your city.
