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Testimony before the New York City Council Aging Committee on the New York City Fiscal Year 2015 Preliminary Budget

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Chairperson Chin and members of the Aging Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Maritza Silva-Farrell and I am Senior Organizer at ALIGN and Lead Organizer for the New York Caring Across Generations campaign. ALIGN is a long-term community-labor coalition dedicated to creating good jobs, vibrant communities and an accountable democracy for all New Yorkers. New York Caring Across Generations is a coalition of over 40 organizations representing 200,000 New Yorkers, and is the local chapter of a national effort to ensure dignity, respect, and a good quality of life for caregivers and people who receive care.

I would like to start by commending returning members of the Aging Committee for your years of advocacy for the City's seniors, and the Department for the Aging for the quality services it provides senior New Yorkers. Commissioner Corrado, congratulations on your appointment and we look forward to working with you.

I would also like to commend the Mayor for baselining funding for DFTA programs in the Preliminary Budget. But I am here to urge the Aging Committee to support an increase in City funding for the Department for the Aging's home care and case management programs. New York Caring Across Generations urges the Aging Committee to invest \$16 million in the EISEP home care program and \$12 million in the DFTA case management program to double the number of home care recipients to 6,000.

Right now, thousands of seniors are unable to access the home care they need. These seniors fall into the "care gap"—the space where care needs go unmet. In a New York Caring Across Generations survey of over 1,200 New Yorkers, inability to afford home care was the most frequently-cited reason for seniors having unmet care needs. Indeed, many New Yorkers are in the care gap because they cannot afford to pay for the care they need.

73-year-old Brooklyn resident Melba Adams is one example. Miss Melba injured her leg in a car accident years ago, and with impeded mobility, she is unable to complete some household tasks. While her friends and neighbors help as much as they can, there are times when she is left to her own devices, and is unable to take care of her basic household needs. Just above the Medicaid eligibility threshold and unable to afford the out-of-pocket cost of home care services she needs, she finds herself in the care gap.

There are almost 80,000 New York City seniors like Miss Melba: near-poverty

seniors (seniors between 100% and 200% of the Federal Poverty Level) with care needs who do not meet income eligibility requirements for Medicaid and are unable to afford the out-of-pocket cost of home care.

The Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP) was designed to provide part-time home care services for these seniors. The EISEP home care program currently serves just 3,000 seniors in New York City; that is less than 4% of the 80,000 low-income seniors with care needs in the city. As need for home care has been on the rise in the last five years, State funding for EISEP home care has remained constant and City funding has actually declined quite drastically.

Chairperson Chin, in lower Manhattan, there are approximately 4,000 thousand near-poverty seniors with care needs. According to numbers released to us by DFTA, just 216 seniors in this same area currently receive EISEP services. When we met with your office staff last Fall, we heard a story about a 105-year old Chinatown resident who is on a waiting list to see a case manager so that she can access the DFTA home care program. Seniors like your constituent should not have to wait for critical home care services.

Councilperson Arroyo, in the South Bronx just 149 seniors receive EISEP services although approximately 8,500 low-income seniors are in need of care. Councilperson Deutsch, in South Brooklyn, just 319 seniors receive EISEP services although about 9,000 low-income seniors are in need of care. Councilperson Koslowitz, in Northwest Queens, just 308 seniors receive EISEP services although around 8,000 low-income seniors are in need of care. Councilperson Rose, in Staten Island, just 93 seniors receive EISEP services although roughly 2,500 low-income seniors are in need of care. Councilperson Treyger, in Southwest Brooklyn, just 164 seniors receive EISEP services although approximately 7,000 low-income seniors are in need of care. Councilperson Vallone, in Northeast Queens, just 162 seniors receive EISEP services although over 4,500 low-income seniors are in need of care.

The City can and must make a commitment to more adequately fund programs that work for our city's seniors – programs like EISEP home care and case management – that can pull thousands of New York City's seniors out of the care gap and provide some respite to families struggling to care for their loved ones.

With the New York City senior population projected to reach 1.4 million by 2030, close to one million New York City seniors could need home care in the coming decades. Now is the time for the Council and the Administration to seize the opportunity that new leadership brings and turn the page on years of underfunding for senior services, to make investments now to stave off a looming care crisis.

New York Caring Across Generations looks forward to discussing our proposal with members of the Aging Committee in the coming weeks, and to working with the Council and the Administration to increase the City's investment in critical senior services.

Thank you.