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COMPTROLLER LIU CALLS ON FDNY TO ASSESS IMPACT OF HOSPITAL CLOSURE ON MANHATTAN EMS CAPABILITIES

NEW YORK, NY - New York City Comptroller John C. Liu, today, along with Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, State Senator Thomas Duane and Assemblymembers Richard Gottfried and Deborah Glick, called on the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) to evaluate the impact the of the proposed closure and restructuring of St. Vincent's Catholic Medical Center (St. Vincent's).

In a letter to FDNY Commissioner Salvatore Cassano, Liu and others cited recent emergency room closures in Manhattan, as well as the FDNY's own data regarding increased EMS response times as cause for concern that the St. Vincent's restructuring will dramatically limit access to emergency services.

"As you know, if this closure is implemented, a total of 16 New York City emergency rooms will have been shuttered since 2002. Two of these recent closures were in Manhattan and, one of them, Cabrini Medical Center, served some of the very same communities as St. Vincent's Hospital," Liu wrote. "Demand for EMS services is rising throughout Manhattan, placing a greater strain on existing capacity and performance. Indeed, according to the Fire Department's publicly available data, the number of Manhattan ambulance runs has spiked from 305,064 in 2004 to 328,060 in 2009. In addition, average EMS response times to all incidents in the Borough of Manhattan have increased by more than 16 percent since 2004."

The letter also cited the impact on emergency rooms and ambulance turnaround times in Queens as a result of the recent closures of Mary Immaculate and St. John's hospitals, as cause for concern:

"The recent closures of Mary Immaculate and St. John's hospitals in Queens caused emergency room registrations and the number of patients waiting to be admitted from the Emergency Department to soar at surrounding hospitals," the letter continued. "In fact, New York City EMS

reported increases in ambulance transports to the remaining hospitals ranging from 13 to 51 percent in the month following the closure.

"Given the possibility of cuts to EMS in the FY 2011 budget, we urge FDNY-EMS to immediately evaluate the impact of the proposed closure of St. Vincent's emergency room on FDNY-EMS operations and publicly release these findings. Residents and visitors to Manhattan have a right to know how the restructuring of the hospital will affect their access to emergency medical care. This transparency is critical to the effective functioning of government."

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