



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams
New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare
February 28, 2020**

Good Morning Chair Levin and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on measures that would improve the circumstances for people experiencing homelessness with pets in New York City. I am here today to express my support of Intros 1483 and 1484, which would provide accommodations for pets in homeless shelters as well as require reporting on the placement of pets whose owners enter homeless shelters.

As Brooklyn borough president, I have been a proponent of initiatives to combat street homelessness as well as efforts to make it easier for people and pets to be together. Last year, I urged the passage of Bill S4919, advanced by State Senator Parker, which offers a \$100 tax credit to people when they adopt a pet from a shelter.

The heart of our City government lies within its agencies and partners. I recognize a dysfunctional dynamic between the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS), the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC), creating unnecessary crises for one another rather than addressing issues upstream. The measures under consideration today would work to address these issues.

Recently, the National Alliance to End Homelessness published a manual on keeping people and pets together in homeless services. It outlines existing models of sheltering people and pets together across the country, some of which are simple and do not require capital improvements. We need not start from scratch, so let's not overcomplicate the matter with conversations about building new pet-friendly buildings or complete retrofits. We can make select existing shelters accessible to people with pets. New York City should be an example of how compassion and common sense can work hand in hand.

Research indicates pet ownership within the homeless population can decrease stress and anxiety, provide a sense of responsibility, decrease feelings of loneliness, and create more opportunities for social interactions with other people. A nationwide survey conducted last year found that 98 percent of dog owners consider their pets to be family members. If we are to best serve our community, our laws need to prevent the rupture of these beneficial human-animal relationships. People experiencing homelessness have experienced enough trauma. We do not need to further traumatize them by forcing them to give up their pets — possibly the only stable relationship they have in their lives.

I urge you to swiftly pass Intros 1483 and 1484, which would absolve our constituents of the burden of having to decide between seeking services and giving up their pet.

Thank you for your time and consideration.