



LETITIA JAMES
Public Advocate for the City of New York

Public Advocate Progress Report 2017

☑ Supporting Children and Education



☑ Preserving Affordable Housing



☑ Advancing Equality for Women and Girls



☑ Fighting for Workers' Rights



☑ Connecting with New Yorkers



Message from the Public Advocate	1
About the Public Advocate	2
2017 Accomplishments	3
Supporting Children and Education	4
Holding DOE Accountable for Providing Mandated Services to Children with Disabilities	4
Securing Universal School Lunch for All Children	5
Preserving Affordable Housing, Protecting Tenants and the Homeless	6
Advocating for Permanent Affordable Housing	6
Ensuring Fairness and Access to the City’s Housing Lottery	6
Fighting Housing Discrimination Against Transgender Individuals	7
Worst Landlords List	8
Unveiling the Money Financing the City’s Worst Landlords	9
Helping Homeless New Yorkers	10
Advancing Equality for Women and Girls	12
Banning Salary History Inquiries	12
Challenging Corporate Sexism and Racism	12
Ensuring Public Safety and Justice	16
Tackling Gun Violence	16
Closing Down Rikers, Once and for All	16
Advocating for a Fair, Transparent Body-worn Camera Program	17
Supporting Seniors in Their Homes & Communities	18
Ensuring Senior NYCHA Residents with Disabilities Have the Right to Remain in Their Homes	18
Celebrating Seniors	19
Supporting Infrastructure and Transportation	20
Making Transportation Accessible	20
Supporting New York City’s Infrastructure, Riders, and Workers	20
Protecting Immigrant Communities	23
Opposing the Border Wall	23
Educating on Immigrants’ Rights	23
Removing Barriers to Surrogate’s Court for Immigrants	24
Challenging the Muslim Ban, and Engaging in Activism	25
Fighting for Workers’ Rights	26
Combatting Fraud in Construction Worker Training	26
Reforming Mandatory Arbitration in New York City	27
Businesses: Supporting the Engines of Our Economy	28
Preserving Jobs	28
Supporting Small Business and Improving Financial Health with Community Banking	28
Protecting Our Environment	30
Tackling Climate Change	30
Expanding Recycling in NYCHA	31
Promoting New Yorkers’ Health	32
Expanding Access to Breast Cancer Detection Technology	32
Protecting the Affordable Care Act	32
Transforming New York City’s Health Care Infrastructure	33
Supporting Puerto Rico and Hurricane Victims	34
Connecting with New Yorkers	35
2017 Community Affairs Events	36
Constituent Services: Helping Everyday New Yorkers Get the Services They Need	40
2017 Constituent Case Stories	42
Continuing to Fight for New Yorkers	44

Message from the Public Advocate

Dear Friends,

I am proud to have the opportunity to pursue a mission of unity and service – bringing people together on issues we all care about. In this Progress Report, you will read about our work advancing key policy initiatives, and our work legislating, investigating, and litigating to improve the lives of all New Yorkers. As I begin my second term in office, I would like to share with you an excerpt from my inaugural address, which I hope you will find informative.

During my time as Public Advocate, our team has addressed over thirty thousand (30,000) constituent complaints – individuals walking through our doors without a fancy lawyer or lobbyist, but with a need for help.

We have passed more legislation than all previous Public Advocates combined, including groundbreaking legislation that bans questions about salary history from the employment process in an effort to close the wage gap. Because we fundamentally believe that equal pay for equal work cannot just be a slogan – it must be a reality for all employees in our city.

While it may seem at times that there are too many challenges to address, too many opportunities to realize, too many people to help, there are no insurmountable problems when we tap into our collective spirit.

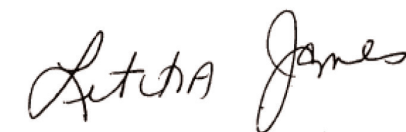
As a City, we must demonstrate a resolve and unity equal to the many challenges ahead of us.

I often think about the people who built this City – the dockworkers, the bricklayers, and the construction crews who paved the way on a road we now travel.

With every rising sun, these pioneers awoke with a passion that built our storied City. And when the sun set, they dreamt again of the promise a new morning would hold.

As we begin a new day in our City, we carry the same optimism, grit, and passion that make New York, New York.

Sincerely,



Letitia James



Letitia James has served as a watchdog for New Yorkers as Public Advocate since 2014.

About the Public Advocate

Public Advocate Letitia James is a tireless champion for working families and the most vulnerable New Yorkers. In 2013, she made history as the first woman of color elected to citywide office in New York City. As Public Advocate, she serves as a direct link between New Yorkers and their government, acting as a watchdog over City agencies, and investigating complaints about City services. She has transformed the Office of Public Advocate to deliver real results and reforms for all New Yorkers, sponsoring more legislation than all other previous Public Advocates combined, and addressing more than 30,000 complaints.

Throughout her lifelong commitment to public service, she has distinguished herself as an advocate and leader on some of the most pressing issues of our time. She has fought for tenants' rights and community renewal and spent much of her career advocating for children and families.

As Public Advocate, she defended children in foster care who were the victims of irreparable harm, protected children with disabilities who were forced to ride on dangerously hot school buses, and fought to ensure that all students have access to a high quality education. James led the fight for universal free school lunch for all public school students, which was implemented in the fall of 2017. She also championed Paid Family Leave and raising the minimum wage.

James has used her platform to address the feminization of poverty. In 2016, James introduced landmark legislation to ban questions about salary history from the employment process to end gender wage discrimination, and on October 31, 2017, New York City became the first municipality in the nation to enforce a salary history ban.

Whether it's through her Worst Landlords Watchlist, legal action, or pushing for legislation, James works diligently to protect tenants and preserve affordable housing.

As a trustee of the New York City Employees' Retirement System (NYCERS), the City's largest pension fund, James led to the fight to divest taxpayer dollars from several of the largest gun retailers in the country and to divest from fossil-fuel companies.

A lawyer by training, James previously served as an Assistant Attorney General and a public defender. James is a proud graduate of CUNY's Lehman College and Howard University Law School. She currently resides in Brooklyn where she was born and raised.

2017 Accomplishments

- ✓ Supporting Children and Education
- ✓ Preserving Affordable Housing, Protecting Tenants and the Homeless
- ✓ Advancing Equality for Women and Girls
- ✓ Ensuring Public Safety and Justice
- ✓ Supporting Seniors in their Homes & Communities
- ✓ Supporting Infrastructure and Transportation
- ✓ Protecting Immigrant Communities
- ✓ Fighting for Workers' Rights
- ✓ Business: Supporting the Engines of our Economy
- ✓ Protecting Our Environment
- ✓ Promoting New Yorkers' Health
- ✓ Supporting Puerto Rico and Hurricane Victims
- ✓ Connecting with New Yorkers

Holding DOE Accountable for Providing Mandated Services to Children with Disabilities

Nearly 200,000 of New York City’s public school children have disabilities that require an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Public Advocate James released a startling investigative report detailing the Department of Education’s (DOE) failure to serve children with disabilities, specifically through their reliance on Related Service Authorization (RSA) vouchers. RSAs are given to parents of children with disabilities when a school cannot fulfill the requirements of their specialized IEP. Public Advocate James revealed that in one district in the Bronx, one of the poorest in the City, RSA vouchers went unused 91 percent of the time, meaning the vast majority of students with disabilities were not receiving their mandated and necessary services.

This DOE policy abrogates its responsibility and fails our children, leaving hundreds of the City’s most vulnerable students without the services they need every year. Public Advocate James pushed for the DOE to reevaluate its reliance on RSA vouchers and to find a way to provide adequate support for all students with disabilities.

Spotlight on Children

A report released this month by the city’s Public Advocate, Letitia James, found that thousands of students with disabilities who were given the vouchers weren’t receiving services to which they were entitled. The report found that nearly half of the 9,164 vouchers issued in the 2015-16 school year went unused, because the families couldn’t find therapists to work with their children.

The New York Times

July 27, 2017

Public Advocate James with children rallying for affordable daycare.



Securing Universal School Lunch for All Children

It’s simple: no child should go hungry at school. In 2014, Public Advocate James successfully pushed for adoption of a universal school lunch program in middle schools and the results were clear. In the first year, participating schools saw an 8 percent increase in the number of students who received free lunch – nearly 10,000 more students eating lunch each day. Believing that school lunch should be available for students of all ages, Public Advocate James continued to push to expand the universal school lunch program to all grade levels to ensure that every child has access to free, nutritious lunch. Following a successful advocacy campaign, starting in the 2017–2018 school year, every public school student has access to a free, nutritious school lunch.

The Public Advocate: A Timeline of Accomplishments

2014

✓ February 26, 2014

Public Advocate James introduces legislation to track youth aging out of foster, providing more accurate information about the fate of young adults who leave the system. The bill is signed into law in September 2014.

✓ March 11, 2014

Public Advocate James first announces her support for universal school lunch. In September 2017, the Administration funds universal lunch for every public school student.

✓ March 13, 2014

Public Advocate James calls on the Administration to withdraw its application for selling and privatizing dialysis clinics, citing higher mortality, infection, and poor staffing rates associated with private clinics. In May 2015, the Administration withdraws the application.

Preserving Affordable Housing, Protecting Tenants and the Homeless

Advocating for Permanent Affordable Housing

Public Advocate James called for a thorough review of the City’s Tenant Interim Lease Apartment Purchase Program (TIL). After hearing complaints from a number of constituents and holding a town hall meeting with TIL residents, Public Advocate James investigated the program and issued a report that found TIL is not fulfilling its purpose of providing New Yorkers with self-sufficient low-income cooperatives. As our City faces a crisis in affordable housing, it is shocking that a City-run program is allowing hundreds of affordable units to remain vacant. The TIL program was established to assist low-income New Yorkers in becoming homeowners of permanently affordable homes, yet poor management and alleged corruption have kept hundreds of units vacant for years.

At press conferences, rallies, and meetings with the leaders of relevant City agencies, Public Advocate James pushed the City to do better and fully commit to the goal of ensuring that every New Yorker has a safe and affordable home.

Spotlight on Housing

Public Advocate Letitia James is calling for an independent review into a housing program that allows renters to buy city-owned apartments for as little as \$250.

The city’s Tenant Interim Lease program... offers below-market rents in city-owned buildings with the understanding tenants will eventually be able to buy the apartments....

THE REAL DEAL
NEW YORK REAL ESTATE NEWS

April 27, 2017

Ensuring Fairness and Access to the City’s Housing Lottery

The City’s affordable housing programs are meant to support New Yorkers, yet the selection criteria to qualify for the housing does not take into consideration the realities of the economic circumstances of many applicants. The current affordable housing lottery selection criteria set forth by the City’s Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) bars many low-income New Yorkers, families, those experiencing homelessness, and the elderly from access to the safe and stable housing provided through the lottery. Public Advocate James released a report recommending improvements to the stringent Tenant Selection Criteria, and calling for greater transparency and accessibility

Public Advocate James with housing and homeless advocates.



Spotlight on Housing

“The changes that Public Advocate James recommends would help address an insidious form of racial injustice, in which people of color are disproportionately blocked from the City’s limited affordable housing stock, based on their alleged credit history.”



Sarah Ludwig, founder and co-director of New Economy Project

in the housing lottery process.

The goal should be to help individuals and families get back on their feet, not to adopt strict criteria that shut them out. A fair shot should be given to all New Yorkers.

Fighting Housing Discrimination Against Transgender Individuals

On the heels of International Transgender Day of Visibility, Public Advocate James released a report identifying the severity and scope of serious transgender housing discrimination and recommended a number of improvements to protect the transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) community. The TGNC community experiences significant discrimination in many forms including in seeking housing. Twenty

2014

✓ April 3, 2014

After UPS fires 250 workers for union actions, Public Advocate James threatens to rescind City contracts with the company. One week later, UPS gives all 250 workers their jobs back.

✓ April 29, 2014

Public Advocate James co-sponsors legislation to create an independent Department of Veterans Affairs, fully dedicated to the needs of veterans. The bill is signed into law in December 2015.

✓ July 22, 2014

Public Advocate James becomes one of the first elected officials to call for the implementation of body cameras for the NYPD. For the next four years, Public Advocate becomes a leading voice on the issue, publishing reports, developing policy, and speaking on panels. By the end of 2018, every NYPD officer will be equipped with a body camera.

The Public Advocate: A Timeline of Accomplishments

percent of TGNC New Yorkers have been refused a home based on gender identity discrimination, and many more have been the victims of discriminatory behavior when seeking a home.

Public Advocate James recommended reforms to City law and policy to better protect the TGNC community, including for the City’s Commission on Human Rights to receive and file complaints at all borough offices and to provide community based organizations small grants to compile discrimination complaints. Every community must have the necessary tools to seek justice, and have a safe place to turn when victimized.

Worst Landlords List

No New Yorker should be subjected to hazardous conditions in their home, yet bad landlords in our City are forcing too many tenants to live in dangerous and indecent conditions. Often, these unscrupulous landlords put profits over people, trying to harass rent-stabilized tenants into vacating, so they can charge higher rents.

In November, Public Advocate James released the 2017 Worst Landlords Watchlist, an annual database of the worst landlords in New York City. The Watchlist is an information-sharing tool that helps to empower tenants and advocates and hold unscrupulous landlords accountable.

This year’s Watchlist was more powerful than ever before, providing a full year’s worth of data, instead of a snapshot in time.

Public Advocate James continued to pressure landlords from the previous 2016 list, with results. Six of the top 10 landlords from 2016 were no longer on the Watchlist in 2017, having made repairs to their buildings. There were also 280 buildings that were no longer on the list.

Worst Landlords, Reformed: Examples of Improved Buildings

- 1725 Fulton Street, Brooklyn: 753 violations as of October 2016 to 37 violations as of September 2017.
- 1122 1st Avenue, Manhattan: 125 violations as of October 2016 to zero violations as of October 2017.
- 35 East 60th Street, Manhattan: 107 violations in October 2016 to zero violations as of October 2017.
- 230 East 89th Street, Manhattan: 129 violations in October 2016 to 12 violations as of October 2017.

Public Advocate James announcing the Worst Landlords with impacted tenants telling their experiences with landlord harassment and numerous building violations.



Spotlight on Tenants

Sylvia T. lives in a building owned by 2017’s Worst Landlord. Sylvia lives with her three children. With no working lock on the front door, trespassers lurk in the hallways to sell drugs. Trash piles up in the courtyard, and the landlord ignored her requests for basic repairs – instead doing construction in other units in the building with the goal of flipping them from rent-stabilized to mark-rent apartments.

Unveiling the Money Financing the City’s Worst Landlords

Public Advocate James revealed the 10 banks that loan to the most buildings owned by the City’s worst landlords, as designated by her Landlord Watchlist. She called on these banks to reform their lending practices to protect tenants. This is the first time the financial backing of the worst landlords has been made public.

Banks must take responsibility for their role in unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions for New Yorkers. Public Advocate James used the list to expose the irresponsible lending practices of these banks and to push them to use their economic leverage to get bad landlords to take responsibility for maintaining basic living conditions in their buildings.

2014

✓ July 23, 2014

Public Advocate James releases report on voting access for New Yorkers with disabilities, making recommendations to improve accessibility at the voting booth.

✓ July 25, 2014

Public Advocate James, joined by advocates, calls for increased training, education, and awareness about sexual assaults on public transit. In October 2014, the MTA announces a number of changes as a result of this push, including an ad campaign that can be seen on subways and buses today.

✓ August 1, 2014

When a landlord on the Upper West Side denies rent-stabilized tenants access to building amenities, Public Advocate James, joined by City Council Members, files a legal brief in support of tenants challenging this as a violation under New York City Human Rights Law. In October 2015, the landlord changes the policy. In July 2016, the City’s Commission on Human Rights awards compensation to the tenants.

Standing up for New Yorkers with housing and legal advocates.



Serving community members on St. Patrick's Day. Public Advocate James is a tireless advocate for New Yorkers' housing rights and access.



Preserving Affordable Housing (continued)

Helping Homeless New Yorkers

Tackling rising homelessness in New York City must be one of the City's top priorities. Throughout 2017, Public Advocate James not only fought to give homeless New Yorkers a shot at stable, affordable housing, but also to improve the lives of those stuck in a rapidly growing shelter system.

In October, Public Advocate James released an alarming report on the struggles that homeless students face in New York City, including chronic absenteeism. The report found that those schools with the largest population of homeless students, and therefore a greater need for mental health and other services, actually had the lowest levels of funding and staff for these needs. Public Advocate James' report highlighted the challenges that

Spotlight on Housing

The public schools are woefully unprepared to meet the needs of an exploding population of homeless students – and kids are suffering because of it, a new report charges.

Public Advocate Letitia James ripped the city's services for homeless public school kids in a Wednesday press conference at City Hall unveiling the report.

DAILY NEWS

October 18, 2017

these homeless students face and called on the Department of Education to address the shortcomings in services.

Public Advocate James has played a central role in pushing to turn vacant land into affordable housing for the homeless. She co-sponsored the Housing Not Warehousing Act that seeks to convert New York City's vacant lots and unused or underused buildings into affordable housing.

2014

The Public Advocate: A Timeline of Accomplishments

September 15, 2014

Public Advocate James releases report on nail salon safety, and introduces legislation to regulate the health and safety of nail salons. In May 2015, the New York Times publishes its exposé on nail salons, drawing national attention to the issue.

December 3, 2014

Following the non-indictment in the Eric Garner case, Public Advocate James becomes one of the first elected officials to call for a special prosecutor in cases with police-involved killings. In July 2015, Governor Cuomo signs an executive order mandating special prosecutors in these cases.

Banning Salary History Inquiries

Previous salary should have no impact on current compensation. That’s why Public Advocate James introduced a bill, which was signed into law in March 2017, that bans employers from asking about salary history. This groundbreaking law impacts approximately 3.8 million workers, and makes New York the first city in the nation to put such a ban into place.

This law is one very important step forward in addressing the persistent gender wage gap that has impeded countless women for decades. Public Advocate James issued a report that found women in New York City earn about \$5.8 billion less in wages than men annually. This wage gap disproportionately affects women of color.

Banning employers from inquiring about salary history will help end the pay gaps that begin early in women’s careers. Notably, this will not just benefit women – it will be a boost for all employees who deserve to be paid based on their worth, not simply what they made at their last job.

Spotlight on Women and Girls

Earlier this month, New York City passed legislation that bans interviewers from asking job applications about their salary histories.... This most recent legislation is the handiwork of New York City Public Advocate Letitia James, who proposed the bill in August 2016 and inspired Mayor Bill de Blasio to approve an executive order three months later that enforced it for all municipal agencies.

ELLE

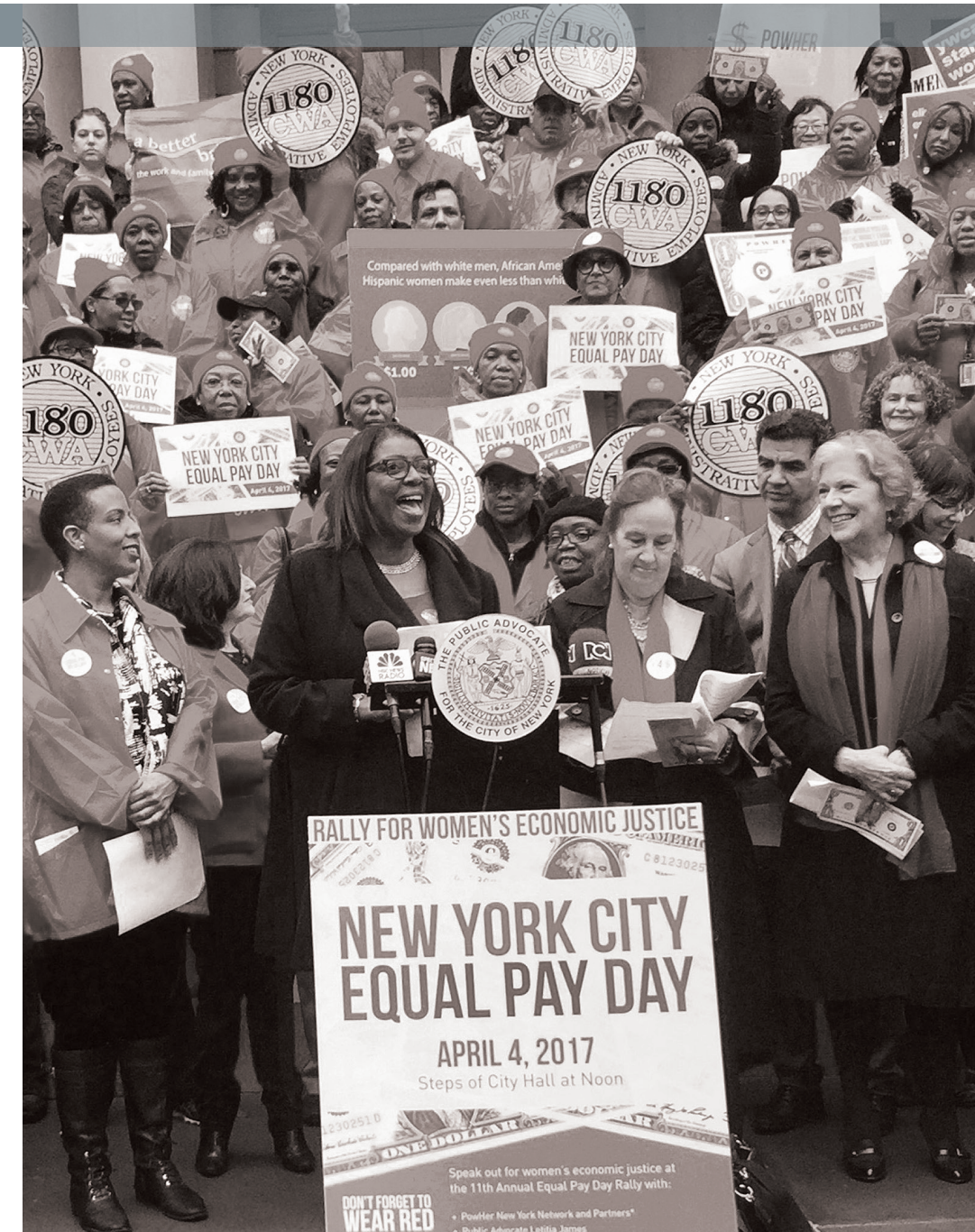
April 20, 2017

Challenging Corporate Sexism and Racism

Following reports of racism and sexual harassment at Fox News, Public Advocate James called for investigations on multiple fronts into workplace discrimination and shareholder deception at the news agency.

In a letter to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Public Advocate James questioned whether Fox News’ failure to make public information about complaints of sexual harassment and payments made to resolve those complaints constituted a failure to disclose material information that would allow its shareholders to assess the risk environment in which the company operates. Public Advocate James called on the SEC to investigate whether the company’s failure to disclose violated federal law.

Celebrating the passage of New York City’s salary history ban legislation in 2017 with elected officials and advocates. Public Advocate James proposed this groundbreaking legislation in 2016.



Gloria Steinem on Wage Equity

“Work should be paid according to its worth, not to any past bias against the worker. By making it illegal for an employer to ask an applicant’s past salary before offering a job, Public Advocate Letitia James is uprooting a cause of discrimination in New York where women earn \$5.8 billion less each year than men do. We owe her our gratitude for helping us to live and work together fairly in this city we love.”

– Gloria Steinem, author and feminist activist

2015

✓ January 6, 2015

Public Advocate James joins school parents in a lawsuit alleging that the Department of Education (DOE) is breaking the law by not opening School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings to the public. In April 2015, the New York State Supreme Court rules in favor of Public Advocate James and school parents. This ruling is affirmed in October 2016 by the Appellate Court.

✓ February 19, 2015

Public Advocate James calls for the Department of Education (DOE) to cancel a questionably sourced and priced contract. The next month, DOE cancels the contract, saving taxpayers tens of millions of dollars.

Standing with Chelsea Clinton and event participants at the Public Advocate's "Closing the Wage Gap" roundtable event. Throughout the year, Public Advocate James hosted a variety of outreach and educational events to inform New Yorkers about the salary history ban law.



Advancing Equality for Women and Girls (continued)

Public Advocate James also urged the City's Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) to investigate whether Fox News and then on-air host Bill O'Reilly violated the City's Human Rights Law's prohibitions against racial and gender discrimination and sexual harassment.

Following the intense public scrutiny, Fox News removed Bill O'Reilly from the network. Public Advocate James continues to advocate on this issue and in December testified at the CCHR hearing on workplace sexual harassment.

Public Advocate James on Sexual Harassment

In the post-#MeToo era, the whole world now knows what women have known since we first set foot in the workplace, since we first went to school, since we were old enough to understand the differences between right and wrong:

Sexual harassment is pervasive, it is corrosive, and it has been a silent roadblock on the road to career growth for generations.

Public Advocate Letitia James

NYC Commission on Human Rights Hearing, December 6, 2017

2015

February 25, 2015

Public Advocate James launches a series of Citywide forums about mayoral control in schools, hearing from parents, educators, students, and community members. In May 2015, she releases a report calling for sweeping reforms to mayoral control.

The Public Advocate: A Timeline of Accomplishments

Tackling Gun Violence

As the country continues to grapple with the horror and trauma of mass shootings, Public Advocate James is leading the fight to take on gun manufacturers, retailers, and those who finance them. A trustee of the New York City Employee Retirement System (NYCERS), she has called on all five of New York City's pension boards to divest from gun retailers. NYCERS overwhelmingly passed her resolution to divest from these companies in 2015. In the aftermath of the Orlando nightclub massacre in 2016, she called on six banks that had recently loaned money to Sig Sauer – the maker of the gun used in the shooting – to terminate their financial backing of the company. One bank recently ended its relationship with the gun company, and Public Advocate James continues to pressure the remaining institutions.

Closing Down Rikers, Once and for All

For years, Public Advocate James has pushed for sweeping changes in the treatment of individuals being held on Rikers Island. Public Advocate James successfully petitioned to create new rules to address high rates of sexual victimization on Rikers and authored legislation to end the financial exploitation of inmates' families who are charged exorbitant rates to send money to their loved ones. In 2017, Public Advocate James called for the Rikers Island Jail to be shut down once and for all.

Public Advocate James is fighting hiring discrimination against individuals with criminal records, is calling for the shutdown of Rikers, and is championing the use of body-worn cameras by New York police officers.



Advocating for a Fair, Transparent Body-worn Camera Program

Since her time in office began, Public Advocate James has been New York City's leading champion in the quest to equip all NYPD officers with body-worn cameras. Following her repeated calls, a report issued by her office in August 2014, and a demonstration of the technology, the City launched a pilot program in September 2014. In Fall 2017, body-worn cameras began to be phased in and will be worn by every patrol officer by 2018.

As the NYPD expands its use of body-worn cameras, Public Advocate James called on the department to procure body-worn cameras with a technical capacity that meets the demand of the program. Public Advocate James also pushed for an objective and transparent process when it comes to releasing footage from body-worn cameras.

2015

✓ February 26, 2015

Public Advocate James releases a report highlighting how New Yorkers are unprepared for retirement and introduces legislation to study a city-sponsored retirement savings plan for all New Yorkers. In February 2016, Public Advocate James stands with Mayor de Blasio to announce such a plan.

✓ March 2015

Public Advocate James releases a report calling for Comcast to provide universal broadband for all New York City consumers in exchange for buying Time Warner Cable. The merger is overseen by New York State's Public Service Commission.

✓ April 9, 2015

Public Advocate James petitions the Board of Correction (BOC) to create rules to address high rates of sexual victimization in City jails, particularly Rikers Island. The rules are adopted by the BOC in November 2016.

Supporting Seniors in Their Homes & Communities

Ensuring Senior NYCHA Residents with Disabilities Have the Right to Remain in Their Homes

Every New Yorker has the right to age gracefully in their own home, and receive accommodations for their disabilities, regardless of whether they live in public or private housing. For years, the City's Housing Authority (NYCHA) has denied aging New Yorkers with disabilities the right to have a family member move in to care for them. This is often the final step between a senior staying in their home or having to uproot to move into a facility, which is usually overwhelming and more costly for all involved. Public Advocate James took multiple actions to ensure senior residents with disabilities in NYCHA buildings have the right to age in place. She filed an amicus brief in a lawsuit to allow a family member to move in with and care for a loved one in NYCHA housing, released a policy report that documented NYCHA's failures and issued recommendations to address those failures, and testified at a City Council hearing to bring greater public attention to this issue.



Spotlight on Seniors

Victoria A. was an 87-year-old woman with dementia living in a NYCHA apartment. Victoria's son, Jonas, wanted to move into her apartment to care for his mother. NYCHA refused more than once to grant Jonas permission to join her household, giving him two options: move in and put her at risk of eviction, or allow her to live by herself, which was no longer safe.

Public Advocate James filed an amicus brief on behalf of **Jonas A.** (pictured at left) on August 7, 2017.

Celebrating senior New York veterans. Public Advocate James took multiple actions to ensure senior residents with disabilities in NYCHA buildings have the right to age in place.



Celebrating Seniors

Public Advocate James visited senior centers throughout the City, helping seniors access information and resources, and helping to resolve constituent issues. Public Advocate James advocated for increased City funding to support senior services including home care, meals and case managers.

In New York City, over half those living with HIV/AIDS are 50 years and older, and there has been a steady increase in cases of sexually transmitted infections in older adults. As part of her visits to senior centers, Public Advocate James hosted a sexual education and HIV prevention training event for senior New Yorkers, joined by elected officials and advocates. She distributed information, fact sheets, and provided a safe space for seniors to ask questions.

The Public Advocate: A Timeline of Accomplishments

2015

✓ May 29, 2015

Eight months after Public Advocate James issues a report on nail salon safety, she stands with Governor Cuomo to announce a statewide manicurists' bill of rights and consumer awareness initiatives.

✓ June 3, 2015

Public Advocate James releases report on Paid Family Leave and recommends passage of the state law, which is signed by the Governor in April 2016.

✓ June 4, 2015

Public Advocate James releases the first in a series of reports calling for expanded access and affordability to child care services.

✓ June 4, 2015

Public Advocate James, along with elderly tenants and people with disabilities, files a lawsuit against the Department of Finance (DOF) for revoking rent subsidies after a death in the family. DOF settles the case and changes its policy in March 2016.

Spotlight on Transportation

“We need a public transportation system that is accessible. The transit system is not accessible if New Yorkers can’t afford the fare.

“There is a lot that we need to do, but we have get to work. The quality of the public transit system is central to our quality of life. A transit system that works for New Yorkers is one that is reliable, accessible, and promotes opportunity. That is our goal, and I look forward to working with the Council, the mayor, the governor, and the MTA to achieve it.”

Public Advocate James
Testimony at New York City Council
Hearing, February 13, 2017

Making Transportation Accessible

New York City must be accessible for all, and this includes our subways, our streets, and our sidewalks. Throughout 2017, Public Advocate James acted to expand transportation access for New Yorkers. She continued championing the “Fair Fares” proposal to create a half-priced Metrocard program for an estimated 800,000 eligible low-income New Yorkers.

Public Advocate James stood up for transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, calling on the MTA to remove gender designation on MetroNorth fare cards. The MTA subsequently announced that it would end the practice of requiring gender identity on the fare cards.

In February 2017, Public Advocate James filed an amicus brief arguing that the City must do more to make intersections accessible to New Yorkers with disabilities. The legal brief argued that New York City failed to maintain pedestrian pathways and provide access to City sidewalks for New Yorkers with disabilities.

Supporting New York City’s Infrastructure, Riders, and Workers

A procession of major delays and breakdowns on the subway and commuter rails in 2017 spawned the “Summer of Hell” for mass transit commuters. In August, Public Advocate James stepped up and questioned MTA officials at a City Council hearing, pointing out the huge monetary contribution that New Yorkers make to keep the trains and buses running, including fares, taxes, and tolls. She called for greater accountability at the MTA and a bigger voice for the City in making the decisions that impact transit riders. Public Advocate James will continue to push to make mass transit reliable for all New Yorkers.

When the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey proposed

Assisting a New Yorker as part of the Sidewalk Accessibility program.



Photo: Yeong-Ung Yang

to place a fee on taxi and for-hire vehicle trips to and from the airport in February, Public Advocate James quickly took action to prevent the cost from falling on the backs of New Yorkers. Writing to the governors of New York and New Jersey, Public Advocate James criticized the proposal for a \$4 per-trip fee that would have been passed on to riders, pointing out that taxi trips to the airport can already cost \$60 or more, and that New Yorkers cannot afford another fee on top of these fares. The scheme would have also been a burden on vehicle operators, who would have had to pay an additional \$5,000 to \$200,000 for a “privilege permit.”

Public Advocate James also pushed for a rule to require every app-

The Public Advocate:
A Timeline of
Accomplishments

2015

✓ June 10, 2015

Public Advocate James introduces legislation to incentivize and expand recycling in NYCHA residences. The bill is signed into law in March 2017.

✓ June 12, 2015

In preparation for a pending expiration of rent regulations in Albany, Public Advocate James assembles a coalition of legal partners to provide legal assistance to tenants, and expands her office and hotline hours to tenants in need. The laws remain expired for just over one week.

✓ June 17, 2015

Public Advocate James releases a guide of mental health resources in all five boroughs specifically geared to the LGBTQ community.

✓ July 7, 2015

Public Advocate James calls on the City’s pension boards to divest from gun retailers. Three weeks later, the City’s largest pension board votes overwhelmingly in favor of the proposal and begins the divestment process.

Championing transportation access for New Yorkers through the Fair Fares MetroCard program.



Supporting Infrastructure and Transportation (continued)

based car hailing service to include the option to tip within the app itself. Without this option, workers were missing out on hundreds of millions of dollars per year. One ride-hailing app company moved to include in-app tipping in July. The City's Taxi & Limousine Commission passed a rule to this effect a few weeks later.

Public Advocate James holding a rally against President Trump's Border Wall.



Protecting Immigrant Communities

Opposing the Border Wall

In March 2017, Public Advocate James released a plan to use New York City's economic leverage to thwart President Donald Trump's efforts to build a wall along the U.S. southern border. The plan called for a ban on such companies from doing business with New York City, and to study divesting New Yorkers' pension investments from any such companies.

Educating on Immigrants' Rights

In the face of increasing deportation raids, intensifying fear, and growing concern amongst many New Yorkers, Public Advocate James launched a public service video campaign to inform New Yorkers what to do in the case of raids by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

2015

The Public Advocate: A Timeline of Accomplishments

✓ July 8, 2015

Public Advocate James, along with foster children, files a class action lawsuit against the City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and the State's Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) for causing irreparable harm to children in foster care. The lawsuit is ongoing.

✓ October 12, 2015

Following an analysis of unclaimed funds, Public Advocate James recovers \$1.67 million that is owed to New York City by New York State.

✓ October 29, 2015

Public Advocate James introduces legislation to promote contractor diversity and economic empowerment through M/WBE procurement reform. The bill is signed into law in September 2016.

✓ November 9, 2015

Public Advocate James releases the second in a series of reports calling for expanded access and affordability of child care services.

Protecting Immigrant Communities (continued)

New York is a Sanctuary City committed to protecting all of its immigrant residents. There has been a tremendous amount of anxiety and misinformation, and Public Advocate James is committed to fighting fear with facts.

Public Advocate James also hosted trainings for staff of state and local elected representatives on how to advise constituents as federal enforcement of immigration laws continues to change. The training focused on preparing for an interaction with ICE, planning for affected family members and children, and how to retain free legal representation.

Public Advocate James also held a widely attended forum to empower communities that experienced a multi-fold increase in discrimination and hate crimes. Specifically, the Office sought to educate New Yorkers about the varying roles of, and to build relationships with, local, state, and federal agencies.

Spotlight on Immigrants

The Office of the Public Advocate of the City of New York responded to the fear of immigrant communities by launching two videos that explain what to do when Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents try to enter your home. The educational campaign comes after the high number of calls received by the Public Advocate's office under the administration of Donald Trump.

EL DIARIO

(translated from Spanish)
May 1, 2017

Removing Barriers to Surrogate's Court for Immigrants

Public Advocate James initiated an investigation into how courts are handling guardianship cases, after learning that New York City's Surrogate's Courts were failing to provide full language access and were wrongfully barring certain non-citizens from filing petitions to serve as guardians.

To address these findings, Public Advocate James urged the Office of Court Administration (OCA) to issue guidance and training materials for court staff, and clarify that petitioners are not required to be U.S. citizens. In response, the OCA addressed the issues with all judges and clerks' offices to meet its obligations to fulfill the promise of equal justice for all.

Standing with immigrant rights activists to support our City's immigrant community.



Challenging the Muslim Ban, and Engaging in Activism

Throughout the year, Public Advocate James stood front and center at numerous rallies and marches defending immigrants' rights, denouncing President Trump's "Muslim Ban" Executive Orders, and condemning proposed construction of a Mexico border wall. She protested with thousands of New Yorkers at JFK airport as travelers were detained as a result of President Trump's Executive Order.

In February 2017, Public Advocate James filed an amicus brief in support of a lawsuit asserting that President Trump's Executive Order on immigration and refugees violates due process rights as well as U.S. immigration statutes.

2015-2016

✓ November 10, 2015

Public Advocate James introduces legislation to protect pedestrians crossing at intersections, by ensuring they have the right of way when a countdown clock is running. The bill is signed into law in September 2016.

✓ December 15, 2015

Public Advocate James files a lawsuit against NYCHA for its policy of keeping tenants in dangerously cold apartments. NYCHA settles the lawsuit and changes its policy in March 2016.

✓ February 1, 2016

Public Advocate James files a lawsuit alleging that the Department of Education (DOE) is failing to track the needs of students with disabilities. The case is ongoing.

✓ March 22, 2016

Public Advocate James co-sponsors legislation to create a publicly available tracking system for commitments made by New York City to communities in connection with major development projects. The bill is signed into law in December 2016.

Meeting with union employees in the workplace. Public Advocate James issued sweeping recommendations to protect workers' rights, shedding light on the use of forced arbitration as a term of employment for workers in New York City and beyond.



Fighting for Workers' Rights

Combatting Fraud in Construction Worker Training

Every year in New York City, hundreds of construction workers lose their lives while on the job. In fact, roughly one-third of all New York City workplace deaths occur in the construction industry. Although federal and local safety and training standards apply, Public Advocate James conducted an investigation and issued a shocking report that revealed widespread fraud and negligence in the safety training issued to construction workers.

Spotlight on Workers

"We commend the Public Advocate for bringing needed attention to the disturbing proliferation of forced arbitration agreements in the workplace. These agreements serve as get-out-of-jail-free cards for employers who steal, cheat, or discriminate against their employees; effectively rolling back hard fought wins for working people like the \$15/hour minimum wage. We're committed to working with the Public Advocate's office to ensure New York's workers are able to enforce their rights."



Meg Fosque, Lead Organizer,
Make the Road NY

Based on that investigation, Public Advocate James proposed a series of recommendations, including designating a City agency to oversee safety training, to make workplace safety trainings more accessible and transparent, to increase public awareness, and to hold employers more accountable for the safety of workplaces.

Reforming Mandatory Arbitration in New York City

Public Advocate James issued sweeping recommendations to protect workers' rights, shedding light on the use of forced arbitration as a term of employment for workers in New York City and beyond.

Forced arbitration is a practice that requires employees to resolve workplace disputes, including disputes regarding wages, sexual harassment, and wrongful termination, through binding arbitration instead of in a court of law. The facts, decisions, and settlements of these cases are kept confidential. These clauses are often hidden in long employee contracts or employee handbooks, and frequently unknown to employees until a dispute occurs. Public Advocate James called for several reforms to protect workers, including requiring companies to register in a public database if they use forced arbitration, requiring companies that use forced arbitration to publicize this fact in job listings, and requiring companies that receive New York City benefits or incentives to not use forced arbitration.

2016

The Public Advocate: A Timeline of Accomplishments

✓ April 11, 2016

Public Advocate James releases a report revealing the breadth of the wage gap in New York City, including that women earn approximately \$5.8 billion less in wages each year than men.

✓ August 2, 2016

Public Advocate James files a brief in support of the directive requiring public schools to accommodate transgender students' use of facilities and programs, joining the national fight to protect the civil rights of transgender students.

✓ August 10, 2016

Public Advocate James introduces groundbreaking legislation to ban employers from asking about salary history, a practice that perpetuates wage discrimination. The bill is signed into law in May 2017.

✓ August 17, 2016

Public Advocate James releases a report and announces recommendations to protect New Yorkers from Zika Virus.

Businesses: Supporting the Engines of Our Economy

Spotlight on Business

When business owners retire, a scary situation for employees could become their opportunity, according to a policy brief from Public Advocate Letitia James Wednesday.

James' office estimates that 114 businesses with sales over \$1 million close each year in New York City because the owner is retiring, costing 2,220 employees their jobs.

"These businesses could have been converted into ESOPs" – employee stock ownership plans – "instead of closing," the report says. It recommends that the city's Small Business Services agency create a "succession planning unit" and that the city's Economic Development Corp. lend workers money or provide loan guarantees to make the purchase.

CRAIN'S
NEW YORK BUSINESS

May 24, 2017

Preserving Jobs

Small- and medium-sized, independently-owned businesses are the bedrock of New York's economy and the lifeblood of its neighborhoods. But over 13,000 New Yorkers lose their jobs each year as a result of business owners retiring and closing their business, often because they cannot sell them. Public Advocate James is committed to saving as many of these businesses as possible and investigated how New York City can stem some of these business closures by encouraging a transition to employee ownership. Doing so would not only ensure that hardworking individuals keep their jobs, but give them a stake in the business, and keep businesses in their communities.

Public Advocate James heard firsthand about the benefits of employee ownership at a forum she convened at a well-known employee-owned business: the Grand Central Oyster Bar. This restaurant may have closed down many years ago if it were not for the option of employee ownership. She also urged Governor Cuomo to sign a bill establishing an advisory panel to support and promote employee-owned enterprises. The Governor signed the bill into law in November 2017.

Supporting Small Business and Improving Financial Health with Community Banking

Too many New Yorkers are forced to use fringe financial services when an emergency expense hits, which can jeopardize credit and spiral one into a lifetime of debt. Public Advocate James convened a forum on community banking and credit unions with elected officials, industry leaders, and nonprofit leaders, and released a report recommending how New York City can improve its financial health by utilizing community banks, credit unions, and Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs).

Working with elected officials, industry leaders, and nonprofit leaders, Public Advocate James released a report recommending how New York City can improve its financial health by utilizing community banks, credit unions, and Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs).



Spotlight on Business

"The CDFI fund has a proven record of success in urban and rural communities alike, and we appreciate the Public Advocate's efforts to maintain and highlight the importance of this program here in NYC, that benefits both the bank and its customers."



Eric Pallas, President, Spring Bank

Among her recommendations were the establishment of a small dollar loan program for City workers at community banks, credit unions, and CDFIs, and exploring ways that the City of New York could bank with these institutions. Making it easier for more New Yorkers and small businesses to use community banks and credit unions will not only improve individual lives, but will boost our entire economy.

2016-2017

✓ September 8, 2016

On the first day of school, Public Advocate James launches a campaign to expand protections for students and educate for parents about bullying and sexual harassment in public schools.

✓ October 7, 2016

Public Advocates James releases an in-depth investigative report and announces recommendations to reform the tax lien sale.

✓ October 25, 2016

Public Advocate James releases report on the gap in breast cancer survival rates, and calls for the expansion of 3-D Digital Breast Tomosynthesis and coverage under Medicaid. In June 2017, the State expands Medicaid to cover the procedure.

✓ February 28, 2017

Public Advocate James files a legal brief arguing that New York City has failed to maintain pedestrian pathways and provide access to City sidewalks for New Yorkers with disabilities.

Tackling Climate Change

Public Advocate James has been a leading voice in the fight to divest from fossil fuels. In 2017, she became the first Citywide elected official to call for divestment. In November 2017, following the fifth anniversary of Superstorm Sandy and on the heels of a disastrous hurricane season, she hosted a hearing to discuss the potentially catastrophic consequences of climate change and how New York City can implement strategies and solutions to challenge its effects. The hearing featured testimony from scientists, advocates, public health professionals, business leaders, and elected officials who highlighted the consequences of human-induced climate change and proposed solutions for New York City to prevent future damage.

One month after the hearing, Public Advocate James voted to begin the process of divesting public dollars from fossil fuels.

Leading the fight against climate change with Mayor de Blasio. Public Advocate James called for the immediate divestment from fossil fuel companies by New York City's pension systems in December 2017.



Spotlight on Our Environment

“From rising seas and temperatures to extreme weather that brings storm surges and unprecedented heat, climate change is a threat to the health and safety of every New Yorker and to the vibrant economy of our city. With the absence of leadership on this issue at the federal level, it has become even more incumbent upon our local elected officials, like Public Advocate James, to be bold in the face of this threat, and promote policies that can mitigate the impacts of climate change, help our city adapt to its effects, and serve as a leader to other cities across the nation.”



Adriana Espinoza, Manager, New York City Program
New York League of Conservation Voters

Expanding Recycling in NYCHA

In March, the City Council unanimously passed Public Advocate James’ legislation to incentivize recycling in NYCHA residences. Recycling in the City’s public housing developments had been difficult due to a variety of factors, including a lack of space to accommodate proper recycling bins and inadequate outreach and education to residents. As a result, recycling rates are often lower in community districts with high rates of public housing residents.

Recycling is one of the easiest ways to protect the environment and conserve precious resources. This legislation requires NYCHA to take a holistic look at expanding recycling in public housing, including through incentive programs. It also supports small businesses by injecting money back into the local economy and helps save New York City millions each year.

2017

The Public Advocate:
A Timeline of
Accomplishments

- March 13, 2017**
Public Advocate James calls for an extended permit for the “Fearless Girl” statue. Two weeks later, Mayor de Blasio extends the permit for one year.
- April 13, 2017**
Public Advocate James calls for multiple investigations into Fox News following reports of sexual harassment and racism, notably from host Bill O’Reilly. Six days later, O’Reilly resigns.

- May 1, 2017**
Public Advocate James releases videos to inform New York City immigrants of their rights when faced with ICE encounters.
- June 27, 2017**
Public Advocate James hosts a public hearing on possible repeal of Affordable Care Act.

Expanding Access to Breast Cancer Detection Technology

Digital Breast Tomosynthesis (DBT) is a three-dimensional technology that significantly increases the accuracy of breast cancer diagnoses, but until recently was not widely available to many low-income New Yorkers. Following a recommendation from Public Advocate James, Governor Cuomo announced in February 2017 that health insurers in the state must provide coverage of DBT without copays, coinsurance, or deductibles. In November 2017, the Governor signed into law a bill that requires insurance companies to cover DBT. Women across New York now have access to this innovative new technology that can help save lives through its improved accuracy and cancer detection rates. Expanding access to DBT may also go a long way in closing the racial and economic survival gaps among women with breast cancer.

Protecting the Affordable Care Act

Though 23 million Americans were threatened with loss of health insurance, no public hearings were held in Congress to discuss the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. Public Advocate James held an official hearing as an opportunity for New Yorkers to speak out on how a repeal of the Affordable Care Act would affect their lives and families. The hearing, which featured testimony from doctors, medical experts, patients, and health organizations, demonstrated the far- and wide-reaching consequences that the proposed bills would have on consumers, providers, and especially low-income Americans.

The repeal did not pass, but Public Advocate James will continue to fight to ensure that New Yorkers have access to healthcare coverage.

Fighting against the repeal of the Affordable Care Act with healthcare advocates.



Transforming New York City's Health Care Infrastructure

Since 2003, 18 hospitals have shuttered their doors in New York City. The City's public hospitals are especially vulnerable. Meanwhile outpatient care continues to grow at rapid rates. Public Advocate James is convening a taskforce on healthcare delivery to identify innovative solutions to create a more resilient and effective delivery model that improves healthcare outcomes in New York City.

2017

✓ July 12, 2017

Public Advocate James releases an investigative report detailing the Department of Education's (DOE) failure to serve children with disabilities and calls for reform.

✓ August 10, 2017

Public Advocate James releases an investigative report detailing widespread inadequacy and fraud in construction safety training, along with recommendations to address the issue.

✓ August 15, 2017

Public Advocate James unveils the ten banks that loan to the most buildings owned by the City's Worst Landlord Watchlist.

✓ October 13, 2017

Public Advocate James releases a plan to support Puerto Ricans and U.S. Virgin Islanders who are seeking refuge in New York City following major hurricanes. The following week, Mayor de Blasio opens a service center to support refugees and survivors.

Public Advocate James advocated for and supported hurricane relief efforts, and efforts to support displaced individuals arriving in New York City.



Supporting Puerto Rico and Hurricane Victims

Following the immense damage that Hurricane Maria caused to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the humanitarian crisis that ensued, Public Advocate James released a plan to support those who were displaced by the storms. She convened a broad coalition of advocates, who urged New York to take immediate action to assist those individuals and families coming to New York. The following week, Mayor de Blasio announced the opening of a service center to support these displaced individuals and families.

The Public Advocate's staff also supported the Hispanic Federation for Puerto Rico relief efforts with resources and communications assistance.

Public Advocate James proudly co-sponsored a toy drive. Over 300 toys were collected and distributed both on the island of Puerto Rico as well as at a shelter in the Bronx on Three Kings Day.

2017

✓ October 18, 2017

Public Advocate James releases a report on the struggles that homeless students face in New York City and calls for common sense solutions to address the problems.

✓ November 27, 2017

Following the revelation that NYCHA failed to test apartments for lead, and lied to public officials, Public Advocate James launches an ongoing investigation into the agency and surrounding events.

The Public Advocate: A Timeline of Accomplishments

Connecting with New Yorkers

✓ 2017 Community Affairs Events

✓ Constituent Services: Helping Everyday New Yorkers Get the Services They Need

✓ 2017 Constituent Case Stories

✓ Continuing to Fight for New Yorkers

2017 Community Affairs Events

Public Advocate James met with New Yorkers throughout all five boroughs in 2017.

The goals of the meetings and events are to provide direct access to government and ensure that our City's services are being effectively delivered. Public Advocate James wants to ensure that New Yorkers have a voice in their government.

Community Affairs events included her ongoing "Talk to Tish" community forums, the hosting of celebrations and roundtables on behalf of the City's many valued immigrant communities, the public safety-focused National Night Out, and rallies against injustice toward New Yorkers.

Examples of the Public Advocate's Community Affairs events, which were attended by thousands of New Yorkers in 2017, are shown on the following pages.

January 17, 2017 Public Advocate James hosted a job fair for Russian-speaking residents in South Brooklyn. Over 1000 residents attended the job fair, with over 60 employers including city agencies, small businesses, non-profits, and private businesses.



February 27, 2017 Public Advocate James hosted her 3rd Annual Lunar New Year event.



March 1, 2017 Public Advocate James hosted her 45th Talk to Tish, in Harlem, where residents shared their concerns regarding issues impacting their community.



March 31, 2017 Public Advocate James hosted her 46th Talk to Tish, in Bushwick/Cypress Hills, where residents shared their concerns regarding issues impacting their community.



May 16, 2017 Public Advocate James hosted her 47th Talk to Tish, in Long Island City, where residents shared their concerns regarding issues impacting their community.



June 7, 2017 Public Advocate James hosted a Caribbean American Heritage Celebration, and honored several leaders from the Caribbean community.



June 29, 2017 Public Advocate James hosted her 3rd Annual LGBTQ celebration, at which she honored several leaders in the LGBTQ community and celebrated their accomplishments.



August 1, 2017 Public Advocate James and her team attended over 70 National Night Out events, an annual event that seeks to build relations between police and the communities they serve.



September 26, 2017 Public Advocate James hosted a round table where she met with Greek leaders regarding issues in their community.

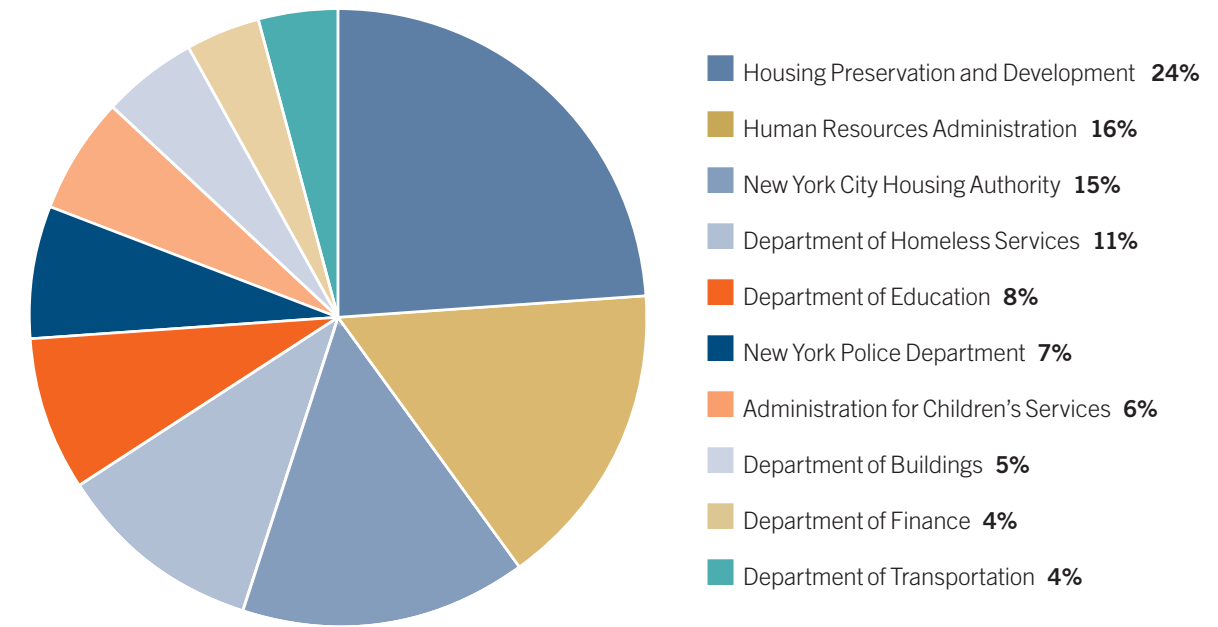


Constituent Services: Helping Everyday New Yorkers Get the Services They Need

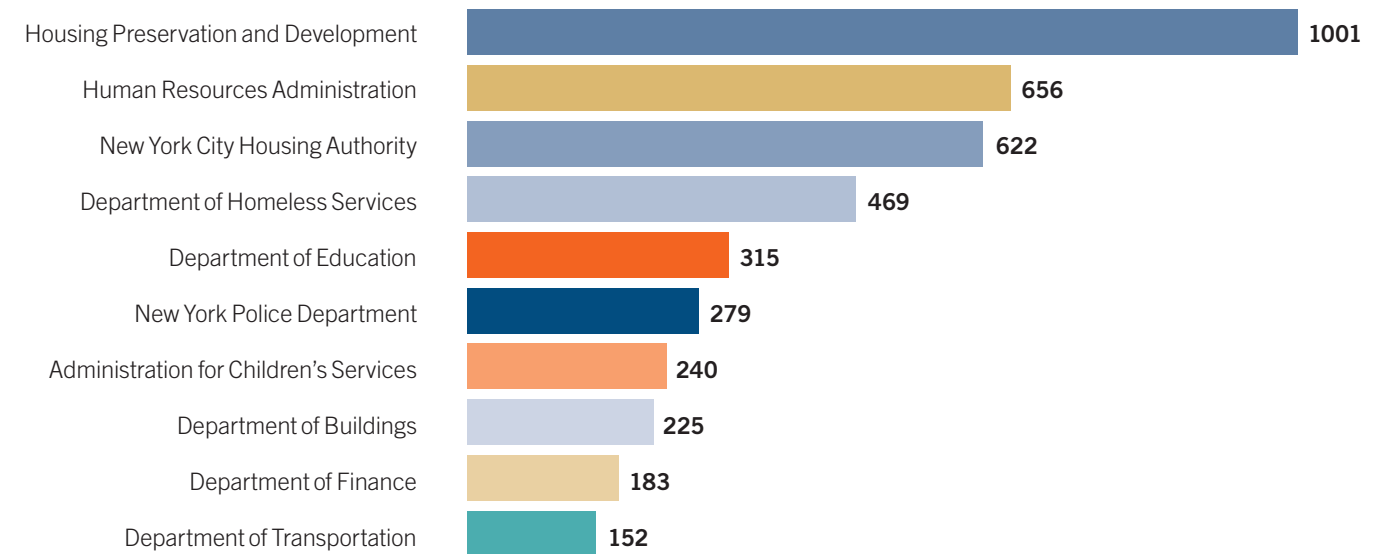
Helping the most vulnerable individuals and families in need is the bedrock of Public Advocate James' Constituent Services operations. Since she took office in 2014, the Public Advocate's office has helped over 33,000 New Yorkers. Each month, thousands of New Yorkers contact or visit the Public Advocate's office where they receive help cutting through red tape, identifying resources, getting questions answered, and obtaining general support. The office's Constituent Services team has helped families with heat and hot water complaints, stopped unfair evictions and investigated and reported wrong-doing that results in low-quality public services.

Total Number of Constituent Cases since January 2014:	33,029
Total number of 2017 Constituent Cases:	6,858
See pages 42-43 for Constituent Case Stories.	

Percentage of Cases by Agency



Number of Cases by Agency

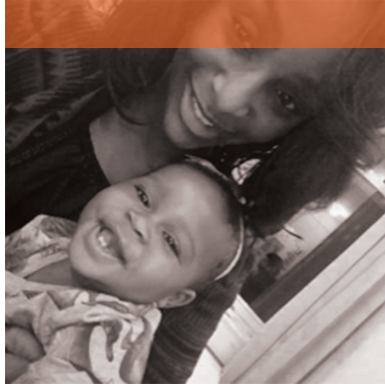


Herkimer Gardens Tenants Association

Spotlight on Constituent Services: Veronica C., Herkimer Gardens Tenants Association – Brooklyn

Veronica C. contacted the Public Advocate's office because her entire building did not have heat, hot water, or elevator service. The water was so cold that the residents had to boil it in order to shower. The apartments were freezing due to lack of heat. In addition, the elevators in the building were shut off without any notice beforehand. Due to the advocacy of the Public Advocate's office with the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and Department of Buildings (DOB), the landlord was forced to restore the heat and hot water, and make repairs to the elevators.

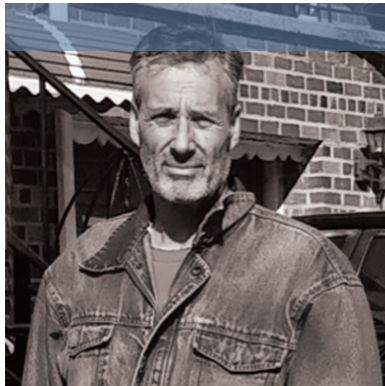
"Thanks to the Public Advocate's office for promptly contacting HPD on this matter and requesting that they conduct a site inspection as soon as possible. Heat and hot water is now better. Elevators are all working."



Danielle M. – Queens

When Danielle’s father fell ill while she was pregnant with her daughter, she needed to find a new place to live. She struggled to get the appropriate voucher from the City that would help ensure she stayed out of the shelter system. Danielle contacted Public Advocate James’ office, whose team expedited the processing of the affordable housing voucher – and got mom and baby into their home.

“My life took a turn downward when I, the household’s provider, became the one in need. I found out I was pregnant and needed somewhere to live. HRA was giving me the run around for the City’s Family Eviction Prevention Supplement (FEPS) voucher that I was approved for. I was desperate and called the Public Advocate’s office. My life changed when the Public Advocate’s Constituent Services associate worked with me and my case. Now my baby girl and I are in our new apartment. I am eternally grateful.”



Michael W. – Brooklyn

Michael contacted the Public Advocate’s office seeking assistance regarding a 14-year-old violation that was issued to his home for a formerly broken sidewalk. The repairs were completed in 2004, and all necessary documentation was submitted to the Department of Transportation (DOT) confirming the finished repair. Michael was in the midst of selling the property but the violation resurfaced; further research on his end found that DOT never adequately recorded the completion of the repair. Michael reached out to DOT and attempted to resolve the problem to no avail. The Public Advocate’s team was able to arrange the necessary inspection to have the violation removed and Michael was able to move forward with selling the house.

“I contacted 311 to remove a sidewalk violation on my house in Brooklyn. The permits plus work were completed. A request for inspection was submitted October 27, 2016, another one on December 12, 2016 and again on January 18, 2017. But the DOT did nothing. Only when the Public Advocate’s office stepped in, it was finally inspected and removed.”



Scott R. – Manhattan

Scott was issued a parking ticket in error, which was dismissed. He thought that was the end of it but then his car was towed. The towing fee was \$185. He tried to contact the City’s Department of Finance (DOF) to get the fee removed but after repeatedly calling them, he got nowhere. The Public Advocate’s team contacted the DOF and successfully got Scott a refund.

“I reached out to the Public Advocate’s office on a tow fee refund for a parking ticket that was already dismissed. The Public Advocate’s Constituent Services associate responded right away in both a professional and cheerful manner. I commend both the professionalism and efficiency of the Public Advocate’s office.”



Laura M. – Staten Island, NY

Laura reached out to the Public Advocate’s office with concerns regarding the City’s Build It Back program. Though repairs were made to her Hurricane Sandy damaged home, a proper inspection was never conducted. Because of this, when National Grid had visited the home, they found that the pipes were faulty, subsequently shutting off the gas and removing the meters. This led to Laura having to move out of her home, because she no longer had heat or hot water. Her landlord had called the City’s Build It Back program, but they had advised him to hire a private plumber as they had closed his case with the recovery agency. In an effort to assist, the Public Advocate’s team contacted National Grid, Build It Back, and the City’s Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). Within a week of contacting Public Advocate’s office, Laura had her gas services restored.

“Stressed and frustrated, I reached out to the Office of the Public Advocate, which intervened on my behalf and had the matter resolved in days. The actions of the Constituent Services associate represent the best qualities in public servant workers that are all too often overlooked. The empathy to these situations along with the effective advocacy skills had a huge impact on the quality of my life. I wish to acknowledge the efforts and take this opportunity to thank the Public Advocate’s office for the important work that is being done on behalf of New Yorkers in need.”



Natalie A. – Bronx

Natalie contacted the Public Advocate’s office as she was in the process of receiving an eviction notice because she owed rent arrears of \$3,700. She applied for emergency rental assistance but was denied by the City’s Human Resources Administration (HRA). The Public Advocate’s team provided various resources to assist her with rent arrears and advised her to reapply. In addition, the team contacted HRA and shared that the constituent was denied an extension from court and was facing eviction, and requested that they review this matter. HRA then approved the constituent’s request to pay her rent arrears and she and her daughter were able to stay in their home.

“The Public Advocate’s office went the extra mile to have HRA approve me for the one shot deal. I can’t thank the office enough for this or else I don’t know where my daughter and I would be right now. Not only was the Public Advocate’s Constituent Services associate able to have my case approved but he was very professional, kind and very much helpful. Again I would like to thank you so much for helping me get approved for the one shot deal. I have got to be the happiest woman right now because that’s one less thing I have to worry about.”

A black and white photograph of Public Advocate Letitia James taking the oath of office at City Hall. She is standing at a podium with the City of New York seal, her right hand raised. To her left, a man in a dark jacket and cap is adjusting the microphone. To her right, two other people are watching. The background shows flags and the interior of City Hall.

Continuing to Fight for New Yorkers

Public Advocate Letitia James at the beginning of her second term, taking the oath of office at City Hall.

Edwin J. Torres/Mayoral Photography Office

I took the oath of office for Public Advocate of the City of New York, and I am honored to serve New York City for another term. As we look to the challenges ahead, we must demonstrate a resolve and unity equal to the problems that face us. Whether it's the lack of affordable housing, saving our small businesses, or reforming our criminal justice system — we will do it all with the optimism, grit, and passion that makes New York, New York. We have always led this City with strength, opportunity, and unity. These next four years will be no different.

From Public Advocate Letitia James' Inaugural Address,
January 1, 2018



LETITIA JAMES

Public Advocate for the City of New York

The Public Advocate for the City of New York is a Citywide elected official who serves as a direct link between the electorate and City government, acting as a watchdog for New Yorkers. The Public Advocate, who is the second-highest ranking official in New York City, provides oversight over City agencies, investigates New Yorkers' complaints about City services, and takes legislative, legal, or policy actions to address the shortcomings of those services. The Public Advocate presides over New York City Council stated meetings and is a non-voting member of the Council with the right to introduce and co-sponsor legislation.

Office of NYC Public Advocate Letitia James
1 Centre Street
15th Floor
New York, NY 10007
www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov
(212) 669-7200



facebook.com/paletitijames



[@nycpa](https://twitter.com/nycpa)