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COUNCIL BILL TO ENSURE GOOD JOBS AT CITY-FUNDED DEVELOPMENTS AND WORKSITES INTRODUCED

– Council Member Mark-Viverito Pushing for Immediate Hearings –

CITY HALL, NY – Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito today introduced a bill that would guarantee good wages, health care and other benefits to building service workers who work at new, city-subsidized developments and newly-leased city work sites. These job standards, which would require prevailing rates for the workers, are similar to those included for Coney Island, Willets Point and other mega-developments. “Too many New Yorkers are working hard but struggling to get by,” said Councilwoman Mark-Viverito. “City Council must ensure that tax dollars don’t fuel the cycle that keeps working families in poverty.”

Over the past few years, 32BJ has worked with the Mayor, City Council and a broad coalition of labor and community organizations to ensure that guarantee developments at Coney Island, Willets Point, Greenpoint/Williamsburg and Hunters Point create good jobs. These developments, once completed, are expected to create some 500 building service worker jobs paying prevailing wages. Without these guarantees, the office cleaners, residential building workers and security officers could have been paid as little as minimum wage.

“There’s no reason why workers at city-funded sites should get paid less than workers at these other sites,” said Mike Fishman, President of 32BJ—the union representing 70,000 building service workers in New York City. “Government should not be in the business of creating poverty jobs.”

“This bill would rightly end handouts to those developers who refuse to meet the needs of working families,” said Brad Lander, Council Member-elect and former director of the Pratt Center for Community Development. “We need a responsible city wide economic development policy that ensures the entire community benefits.”

The number of New Yorkers working but still living in poverty has been on the rise – a 75 percent increase between 1990 and 2005. Until recently, some of these workers were City-contracted security officers who were earning just above the minimum wage and had no access to affordable health care. A new union contract and an increase in the prevailing wage have helped bring many of these workers, whose wages are indirectly paid by city tax dollars through contractors, out of poverty.

“I work hard to help keep the City running,” said Benita Mays, single-mother and security officer at the Brooklyn Municipal Building. “Now I can actually raise my family on my paycheck.”

“Sector-wide solutions like this are the most effective way to make an impact on poverty,” said David Jones, President of Community Service Society. “The men and women who keep our buildings clean and safe should earn enough to make ends meet and provide stability for their families.”

With more than 110,000 members, including 70,000 in New York City, 32BJ is the largest property services union in the country.

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