

BY: Senator HOYLMAN

HONORING Sarah Desmond upon the occasion of stepping down after 24 years of distinguished service at Housing Conservation Coordinators and for her many invaluable contributions to the preservation and expansion of affordable housing on Manhattan's West Side and throughout New York City and State

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body seeks to acknowledge those individuals whose professional lives and activist endeavors enhance the wellbeing of the people and physical spaces that constitute the soul of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to honor Sarah Desmond upon the occasion of stepping down after 24 years of distinguished service at Housing Conservation Coordinators, rising to become Executive Director; and

WHEREAS, Housing Conservation Coordinators champions social and economic justice by fighting for the legal and moral rights of low-income and working New Yorkers in Manhattan's neighborhoods of Hell's Kitchen, Clinton and the Upper West Side, with a focus on preserving and expanding affordable housing; and

WHEREAS, During Sarah Desmond's tenure as Executive Director, Housing Conservation Coordinators attained financial stability and grew to a budget five times larger than when Sarah arrived as an organizer; and

WHEREAS, Sarah Desmond brings an endless focus to this mission, as she did with a devastating fire in a Hell's Kitchen tenement in 1986 that left dozens homeless, making the return of tenants a personal mission that took four long years but was ultimately, incredibly, successful; and

WHEREAS, Sarah Desmond takes an expansive view of Housing Conservation Coordinator's work, incorporating vociferous advocacy for the creation, enforcement and preservation of the Clinton Special District, ensuring the character and economic diversity of that historic neighborhood is preserved for future generations; and

WHEREAS, This dedication to using all available tools to maintain the vibrancy and diversity of Manhattan's West Side extends to public affairs campaigns, as in the successful fight against a football stadium, as well as legislative advocacy at the municipal and state levels, with Sarah Desmond playing a crucial role in the fight against illegal hotel use and the danger therein to New York's housing stock; and

WHEREAS, Sarah Desmond seems never to have heard the word "impossible", tackling multi-party negotiations with tremendous intelligence, creativity and fairness, as when she negotiated a complex deal to incorporate unorthodox air rights options in exchange for lifetime tenancy agreements for vulnerable New Yorkers; and

WHEREAS, During her tenure as Executive Director of Housing Conservation Coordinators, Sarah Desmond oversaw the organization's expansion of free legal services, including direct representation, pre-litigation advocacy, building-wide organizing support, public benefits identification and application assistance, immigration services and elder law; and

WHEREAS, Sarah Desmond is an uncommonly kind, calm and generous person, infusing the most difficult situations with equanimity, integrity and clarity, and never hesitating to share her time with the most junior or most senior person in need of her expertise; and

WHEREAS, Because of these qualities and so many more, Sarah Desmond has become a trusted advisor, partner and friend to generations of elected officials, community activists, organizers and any New Yorker fortunate enough to make her acquaintance and share her values; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor Sarah Desmond upon the occasion of stepping down after many years of distinguished service to Housing Conservation Coordinators; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Sarah Desmond.