



Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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Shahabuddeen A. Ally, Esq., Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

January 5, 2017

Hon. John J. Degnan
Chairman
The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
4 World Trade Center
150 Greenwich Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairman Degnan:

At our General Meeting on December 20, 2016, Community Board 12 - Manhattan passed the following resolution by a vote of 30-0-0 calling upon the Port Authority of NY/NJ to act with urgency to install safety fencing on the George Washington Bridge to prevent the unfortunately large number of suicides from continuing to occur there:

Whereas: The large number of suicides and suicide attempts occurring on an all too frequent basis on the George Washington Bridge has been a long-standing concern of Community Board 12-Manhattan; and

Whereas: The guardrail along the pedestrian walkway on the bridge is not sufficiently high enough to prevent people who intend to end their lives from jumping off the bridge into the Hudson River; and

Whereas: The Port Authority says that 16 people committed suicide by jumping off the bridge last year and another 82 attempted to do so but were stopped by the Port Authority Police and others, and 11 people have jumped off the bridge so far this year and another 67 have been stopped; and

Whereas: Over the 85-year history of the bridge, it is likely that hundreds of people have jumped to their deaths from the bridge, making it a major "suicide hotspot" in our community; and

Whereas: The installation of higher, more effective fencing specifically intended to prevent suicides is clearly needed to serve as a deterrent for such unfortunate and irreversible incidents; and

Whereas: Since the bridge walkways provide unique and magnificent views, any such fencing should be designed to be as visually unobtrusive as possible; and

Whereas: An example of apparently highly effective fencing was recently deployed by New York City in its reconstruction of the historic High Bridge, also in our community. This fencing is virtually impossible to climb with bare hands and is surprisingly transparent; and

Whereas: A research study published in the journal *The Lancet Psychiatry* in 2015 found that installing barriers can reduce the number of deaths by more than 90% at high-risk suicide locations; and

Whereas: The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey says that it intends to install 11-foot safety fencing as part of a project involving replacement of the suspender rope on the north side, rehabilitation of the main

cable and replacement of the sidewalk; that this work will begin in early 2017 and take approximately four years to complete, and that similar work will be done on the south side of the bridge subsequently over an additional period of approximately four years; and

Whereas: The Port Authority says it is now planning to install temporary safety fencing on an earlier timeframe that has not yet been determined; now, therefore, be it

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan calls upon the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to act with the urgency that this situation demands and install the temporary and permanent safety fencing on an expedited basis in order to save as many lives as possible.

We look forward to your favorable consideration of this resolution and hope to hear from you shortly.

Sincerely,



Shahabuddeen A. Ally, Esq.
Chairperson

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| cc: | Hon. Andrew Cuomo, Governor | Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman |
| | Hon. Patrick J. Foye, Executive Director | Hon. Bill Perkins, State Senator |
| | Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor | Hon. Marisol Alcantara, State Senator |
| | Hon. Letitia James, Public Advocate | Hon. Herman D. Farrell, Jr., Assembly Member |
| | Hon. Scott Stringer, Comptroller | Hon. Carmen de la Rosa, Assembly Member |
| | Hon. Gale Brewer, Borough President | Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member |
| | | Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member |