



**DONOVAN RICHARDS**  
President

**CITY OF NEW YORK**  
OFFICE OF THE  
**PRESIDENT OF THE BOROUGH OF QUEENS**  
120-55 QUEENS BOULEVARD  
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11424

718.286.3000  
[www.queensbp.org](http://www.queensbp.org)  
[info@queensbp.org](mailto:info@queensbp.org)

December 23, 2021

Dr. Mary T. Bassett, M.D., M.P.H.  
Acting Commissioner, New York State Department of Health  
Corning Tower, Empire State Plaza  
Albany, NY 12237

Dr. Dave A. Chokshi, M.D., MSc  
Commissioner, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
42-09 28th Street  
Long Island City, NY 11101

Dr. Ted Long, M.D., MHS  
Executive Director  
NYC COVID-19 Test & Trace Corps  
125 Worth St.  
New York, NY 10013

RE: Need for more COVID-19 testing sites in “Testing Deserts”

Dear Drs. Bassett, Chokshi, and Long:

We are writing to ask your respective departments to dramatically increase the number of COVID-19 testing sites across the borough, and especially in traditionally underserved neighborhoods in Queens.

As you know, the recent arrival of the highly transmissible Omicron variant of COVID-19 in the U.S. has prompted a large increase in the number of Queens residents looking to get tested for COVID-19. In seeking testing, these residents are following the advice of public health officials who are rightfully promoting frequent testing as an important tool in our multi-pronged strategy for fighting COVID-19.

It is therefore disheartening to see individuals in our borough encounter long wait times at COVID-19 testing sites in recent days. A shortage of sites has forced people to line up for hours in the cold as they wait to be seen at the limited number of public sites in operation. We believe that these long lines have deterred many people from getting tested and have potentially exacerbated the COVID-19 pandemic by allowing many individuals who may be infected with COVID-19 to go undiagnosed.

We refer to this problem across the borough, as “Testing Deserts,” due to the lack of public testing access in those communities. “Testing Deserts” are also located in neighborhoods home to many minority communities, who as we know, have borne the brunt of this pandemic and are reluctant to begin with when it comes to reinforcing the need to get tested and vaccinated against COVID-19.

To rectify this testing shortage, and to prevent Queens from once again becoming the “epicenter of the epicenter” of the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to swiftly and significantly increase the number of COVID-19 testing sites in Testing Desert neighborhoods throughout the borough.

Queens residents, especially those living in underserved communities, have already suffered an incalculable number of hardships due to this seemingly never-ending pandemic. We cannot allow a lack of adequate testing opportunities to further add to their suffering, or to get in the way of our effort to combat COVID-19 and eventually put an end to this pandemic once and for all.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this matter and await your reply.

Sincerely,



Donovan Richards Jr.  
*President*  
*Borough of Queens*



Michael Gianaris  
*Senator and Deputy Majority Leader*  
*New York State Senate, 12<sup>th</sup> District*



Jessica Ramos  
*Senator*  
*New York State Senate, 13<sup>th</sup> District*



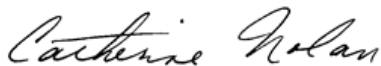
Edward C. Braunstein  
*Member*  
*New York State Assembly, 26<sup>th</sup> District*



Catalina Cruz  
*Member*  
*New York State Assembly, 39<sup>th</sup> District*



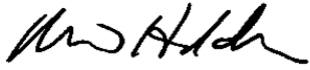
Jessica González-Rojas  
*Member*  
*New York State Assembly, 34<sup>th</sup> District*



Catherine Nolan  
*Member*  
*New York State Assembly, 37<sup>th</sup> District*



Adrienne E. Adams  
*Member*  
*New York City Council, 28<sup>th</sup> District*



Robert F. Holden  
*Member*  
*New York City Council, 30<sup>th</sup> District*



Shekar Krishnan  
*Member-elect*  
*New York City Council, 25<sup>th</sup> District*



Linda Lee  
*Member-elect*  
*New York City Council, 23<sup>rd</sup> District*



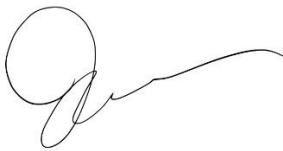
Lynn Schulman  
*Member-elect*  
*New York City Council, 29<sup>th</sup> District*



Sandra Ung  
*Member-elect*  
*New York City Council, 20<sup>th</sup> District*



Nantasha Williams  
*Member-elect*  
*New York City Council, 27<sup>th</sup> District*



Julie Won  
*Member-elect*  
*New York City Council, 26<sup>th</sup> District*