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GEORGE ONORATO
SENATOR, 12TH DISTRICT
ASSISTANT MAJORITY LEADER/LIAISON TO EXECUTIVE BRANCH

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March 25, 2010

Jay H. Walder
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Metropolitan Transportation Authority
347 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10017-3739

Dear Chairman Walder,

I understand the MTA is planning to lay off more than 500 employees in response to its current financial problems. I urge you to use alternative means to get through this challenging period as there are other ways to balance a budget than resorting to layoffs. As you know, the Legislature is also trying to find ways to address the State's budget deficit, but eliminating people's livelihoods is not among them. Last year, the Governor proposed laying off 8900 state employees to save the State money, but he withdrew this harsh measure and found other ways to find savings. I am confident the MTA, under your new leadership, can do the same.

Layoffs are a drastic response that rips apart the security of affected employees and their families. Job losses also have a direct ripple effect on the local economy and government by taking away the ability of workers to support local businesses, provide tax revenues and forcing many onto public assistance.

Reducing MTA's workforce will also impact the security -- and sense of security -- for the thousands who ride the subways regularly, and now feel safer visiting New York City since September 11. Station agents are the key personnel that help riders in the event of an emergency. Security cameras and buzzers for passengers in distress are an unacceptable substitute in a place like New York City where a crime or platform accident can occur in a split second. As the country's largest urban transportation system, MTA has built an excellent reputation of responding to the needs of subway riders and making the City easy to get around by mass transit. That reputation is due to the dedication and quality performance by MTA employees. Station agents can also help curb the loss of \$27 million in revenues from turnstile jumping, as reported in a recent MTA audit. The MTA's workforce is one of its strongest assets which should be maintained -- not reduced -- while the MTA weathers this financial period.

I urge you to consider the alternatives to layoffs that are available to the MTA, including using stimulus funds for its operations from the American Recovery and Revitalization Act. It is my further understanding that new legislation is being considered by Congress that would

provide the MTA with significant new operating moneys. Lastly, I recommend that you examine the use of costly outside contractors. The Legislature and Governor recently approved a similar requirement for state agencies, which is expected to save jobs as well as money.

The MTA's plans to continue its construction projects signals to me that you expect to be able to expand MTA operations well into the future. New York City's mass transit system provides a vital public service which should not be compromised for the current fiscal period by eliminating the individuals that make MTA operations run so effectively for all of us.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss any of these alternatives. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Onorato". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

George Onorato
Chair, Senate Labor Committee

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