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**Testimony of the New York City Independent Budget Office  
On the Mayor's Management Report  
To the New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations**

**December 14, 2015**

Good afternoon Chairman Kallos and members of the committee. I am Doug Turetsky, chief of staff and communications director for the city's Independent Budget Office. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about proposed changes to the Mayor's Management Report.

This is not the first time I or colleagues from IBO have testified in regard to the Mayor's Management Report. Links to our previous testimony can be found [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Given our past testimony, I will focus IBO's comments on one particular aspect of today's agenda: proposed legislation requiring that citizen surveys become part of the annual MMR reporting process. IBO has previously suggested that surveys of residents could add a dynamic element to the MMR, one that provides a broader view of how well public services are being delivered.

The performance indicators in the Mayor's Management Report have long served as a fundamental measure of service delivery in the city. Many of the indicators in the report are focused on inputs and the administration of public services. Such measures are far more important to agency administrators than the broader public.

To residents, what ultimately matters is outcomes. How clean are the streets? How well maintained are the parks? How quickly do the police come when they are called? The Mayor's Management Report also contains performance indicators on these outcomes. But these measures may not always match up with how residents perceive these services. If the MMR's performance measures provide one view but residents or program participants have a different sense, it tells us something may be getting lost in the process of communication or implementation of a particular program.

Sometimes it may also be true that resident perceptions have not yet caught up with actual changes or improvements. But policymakers and other public officials must be aware of the dichotomy in order to address it.

Or there may be another factor in the gulf between performance indicator and public perception. New York is a large and diverse city. A program functioning well in one part of the city may not be performing as well in another. Over the years, the MMR became large and somewhat unwieldy. This caused a streamlining that often led to presenting performance indicators on a citywide basis such as police response times. But response times can be very different for different reasons in different parts of the

city. As a result, perceptions of these response times can also differ. Presenting some of the findings from resident surveys on a borough, community, or other disaggregated basis can provide greater texture and insight into how New Yorkers perceive service delivery.

How the surveys are developed is also critical. Resident surveys can take a number of different forms. They can employ quantitative responses to questions about satisfaction with services and the quality of life in communities, or they seek qualitative responses, or they can take a hybrid approach. Whatever the form, and there are pluses and minuses to each, they should be constructed with input from residents to determine which service outcomes are most important to be surveyed.

Cities ranging from Philadelphia to Portland, San Diego to San Jose use resident surveys to gauge public perceptions of how well services are being delivered and assess their constituents' impressions of the quality of life in their communities. New York would have the ability to review the methodologies used by these and other cities in order to determine what might best work here. But the primary point is this: As IBO testified to the City Council more than a decade ago, resident surveys can be a useful supplement to traditional performance indicators and help public officials—and the public as a whole—have a fuller understanding of the efficacy of municipal services and the tax dollars being spent on them.

Thank you and I would be pleased to answer any questions.