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**Council Members Helen Rosenthal and Ben Kallos Call for
Voter Pre-registration for all 16- and 17-Year-Olds**

On Thursday Council Members Helen Rosenthal and Ben Kallos (Chair, Committee on Governmental Operations) will introduce a resolution calling on New York State to pass A2529 / S857 to allow voter pre-registration for all 16- and 17-year-olds and requiring local boards of education to adopt policies to promote student voter registration.

Voter turnout in New York State is consistently one of the lowest in the country: in the 2012 Presidential election New York State had the seventh lowest voter turnout nationwide, and last year's gubernatorial election New York State had the fourth-lowest voter turnout nationwide.

The statistics for youth voting in New York State are also worrisomely low: in 2012 voter turnout among people age 18-29 was 42%, 20 percentage points lower than turnout among people 30 and older. In the 2008 and 2009 elections, New York City voter turnout among 18- to 29-year-olds was the lowest of any age group.

However, studies show that young people who are registered to vote often turnout at similar rates to older registered voters. Therefore, guiding young people through the registration process is an important step toward increasing youth voter turnout. This is

particularly important when, **by 2020, the millennial generation will comprise just under 40% of all eligible voters nationwide.**

Council Members Rosenthal and Kallos' resolution supports A2529 by Assembly Member Brian Kavanagh and S857 by State Senator David Carlucci, which would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote and would require local boards of education to adopt policies to promote student voter registration and pre-registration, such as collaborating with high schools to conduct voter education and registration. Submission of voter registration forms would not be a course requirement or a graded assignment for students.

This resolution builds upon the Council Members' previous work to promote youth voting. In March 2015 Council Member Rosenthal organized New York City's first annual Student Voter Registration Day (SVRD); she led a coalition of fifteen Council Members (including Council Member Kallos), NYC Votes (the nonpartisan voter engagement campaign of the New York City Campaign Finance Board and its Voter Assistance Advisory Committee), the Department of Education, the Board of Elections, the United Federation of Teachers, the Council of School Supervisors & Administrators, nearly a dozen voter registration and civic engagement organizations, school administrators, principals, and teachers to hold civic education and voter registration events in 25 schools across all five boroughs. The SVRD Coalition registered over 2,000 students. According to the NYC Board of Elections, the Coalition registered 42% more 17- and 18-year-olds than the average number registered in the month of April for the past 5 years.

"Elections shape our everyday lives but voter turnout in New York State is consistently abysmal and youth voter turnout in New York City is particularly low. As we work to create a government that truly serves everyone, we must engage voters of all ages and particularly young voters. Voter pre-registration for 16- and 17-year-olds is one key step to engaging more young voters in what I hope will be a lifetime of civic participation," said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**.

"If hundreds of thousands of young people registered or pre-registered, we would see a massive increase in youth participation across New York City," said **Council Member Ben Kallos**. "The next generation of New Yorkers should be empowered to have their voices heard. Our city should have much higher participation rates across all demographics, and getting young people out to vote early and often sets them up for a lifetime of civic engagement. I am proud to support the legislation from Assembly Member Brian Kavanagh and State Senator David Carlucci for much-needed reforms."

"Our archaic voter registration system in New York needs to be brought out of the dark ages," said **State Senator David Carlucci**. "By allowing young adults to pre-register with the Department of Motor Vehicles at 16 is a common sense approach that will increase voter registration."

"Youth voters have dismally low participation rates, so it's critical that we dismantle the barriers that keep them out of the political process. Pre-registering 16- and 17-year-olds will get more young people onto the voter rolls and into the polls on Election Day. We applaud Council Members Rosenthal and Kallos for making youth voter participation in New York City a legislative priority," said **Amy Loprest, Executive Director of the NYC Campaign Finance Board**.

"Citizens Union thanks the City Council for its support of state legislation to permit youth voter pre-registration, A.2529/S.857 (Kavanagh/Carlucci). We affirmatively believe action must be taken to address the lack of civic participation in New York given our especially low voter participation rates. Pre-registration of 16- and 17-year olds to vote could provide a solution to this problem by establishing healthy civic habits early on for our state's youth and placing an emphasis on our educational system to inform and encourage students to pre-register and vote," said **Dick Dadey, Executive Director of Citizens Union**.

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