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***** Press Release *****

Mayor Fulop and City Council Withdraw Referendum Amid Pandemic

November Ballot Question Removed Asking Voters to Decide on Appointed or Elected Board of Education to Fix Jersey City Public Schools

JERSEY CITY – **Mayor Steven M. Fulop and the City Council** announced today that they will vote on a resolution at the next City Council meeting on Wednesday, May 6, 2020, that will withdraw the referendum asking voters to decide if the Board of Education should move to an appointed board.

“The world is a very different place today than it was in January when we approved the referendum. We still have major concerns with the Board of Education’s decision to raise taxes on residents during the pandemic, but the reality is we don’t want to be more disruptive to the schools when they return in September after being closed for months. Our focus has always been what is best for the schools, and we just don’t see putting the city through a referendum in this environment as responsible,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “We’ve been working closely with the Superintendent to help get the schools back on track as swiftly as possible due to the unforeseen obstacles we’re facing amid the pandemic.”

“There’s no arguing the schools need help when we first introduced this,” said **Council President Joyce Watterman**. “Today, we’re in a much different climate, and we need to think about what is the best course of action in this new environment for our students, parents, teachers, and residents”.

The referendum, approved in January, will no longer be placed on the November ballot as scheduled, which would have asked for residents to vote if they want to move from an elected to appointed 9-member Board of Education that represent nearly 30,000 students throughout 42 Jersey City Public Schools, ranging from early childhood to 12th grade.

“At this time, the entire city is experiencing changes that none of us were prepared for. Residents are focused on making sure their families and households are stable,” said **Ward A Councilwoman Denise Ridley**. “The city has to reassess our spending and operations for the remainder of the year. It is best to hold off on making major changes to our BOE structure at this time. The BOE will need all hands on deck focused on post-COVID-19 changes in the coming months.”

“Now is the time for us to concentrate on minimizing the strain on our residents which is why we’ve worked to alleviate this issue for our constituents,” said **Councilman-at-Large Daniel Rivera**.

“It’s really important for all of government to work together, especially during this time,” said **Ward B Councilwoman Mira Prinz-Arey**. “Removing the referendum question is the right thing to do right now. With the uncertainty surrounding this virus and the potential for a second spike come Fall, we need to make sure we’re protecting residents and don’t distract for our number one priority amid this pandemic, which is their health and safety.”

All media inquiries should be directed to Kimberly Scalcione at KScalcione@jcnj.org.