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PRESS RELEASE

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After Visiting With District Attorney McMahon, Assembly Member Charles Fall Joins Call for Needed Upgrades to Staten Island's Family Law Justice System

Staten Island, N.Y. – On Wednesday, Assembly Member Charles Fall visited District Attorney McMahon to gain insight into Staten Island's family law justice system. First, Fall met with Darren Albanese, Deputy Bureau Chief of the District Attorney's Domestic Violence Bureau along with Jevet Johnson, Chief of the Special Victims Bureau to familiarize himself with the legal process as it relates to women and children in crisis and to advocate on behalf of Staten Islanders to fill gaps in the current system. McMahon then escorted Fall to Staten Island Family Court to see firsthand the inadequacy of the existing courthouse. McMahon and Fall also visited the Staten Island Family Justice Center with the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office to End Gender Based Violence Cecile Noel and Staten Island Family Justice Center Director Alison Francis-Lord.

The current Family Court, located at 100 Richmond Terrace was opened in 1931 as the "Children's Court" for Richmond County. The population of Staten Island at that time was approximately 160,000, a number that has tripled to roughly 480,000 today. The Court has been notoriously overburdened and cramped for decades, and today handles over 10,000 cases annually including those involving children, divorces, and as of this year, criminal cases involving 16 and 17 year olds. Fall agreed to help Staten Island's other elected officials to expedite the building of a new Family Law Center in Staten Island as promised nearly two years ago.

District Attorney McMahon said: "I was honored to have Assembly Member Fall visit during his first term and I greatly appreciate his focus on the issue of family justice on Staten Island. We surely need his help, together with Staten Island's Albany & City delegations to help Staten Island get its fair share of court services. The incredible men and women who work in Family Court are doing yeoman work in an antiquated and cramped building and totally unacceptable modular trailers in the parking lot that for decades have masqueraded as courtrooms. I commend Judge Helene Sacco and the entire staff for their exemplary work under these conditions, but the fact remains the current situation is unacceptable."

Assembly Member Fall said: “Thank you to District Attorney Michael E. McMahon, his staff, and my other colleagues in elected office for their continued leadership, his commitment to improving public safety on Staten Island, and for the insight they provided me during our walk-through of the Family Court facilities. Family Court has a large caseload and serves some of the most vulnerable people in our community, including children and young teens. It’s disheartening to see such a dedicated staff provided with such inadequate work conditions. Their caseload continues to grow yet the space and resources are falling far short of the need. The staff’s ability to work effectively in spite of these conditions is commendable.

As an elected official I’m committed to calling on all appropriate agencies to ensure that adequate working conditions are provided. Staten Island needs a well-designed and well-funded Family Court Facility.”

Nearly two years ago in July 2017, DA McMahon, Senator Diane Savino, Borough President Oddo, and representatives of other elected officials, along with representatives from the Office of Court Administration, were briefed on plans to upgrade Family Court and the Supreme Court building at 18 Richmond Terrace, to include the construction of a multi-story building in the parking lot of Family Court. To date, there has been no update on the project. “The silence from Albany and City Hall on this issue has been deafening” said District Attorney McMahon.

McMahon & Fall, together with all of Staten Island’s elected officials, are also sending a letter to Chief Judge DiFiore, Chief Administrative Judge Marks, Mayor de Blasio, and the Director of the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice Elizabeth Glazer for an update on this project.

**Letter attached*