



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**November 16, 2011**

**CITY OFFICIALS & ELECTED OFFICIALS LAUNCH “PROTECT YOUR MONEY:  
KNOW BEFORE YOU ENROLL,” A TESTIMONIAL AD CAMPAIGN ADVISING  
NEW YORKERS ABOUT PREDATORY SCHOOL SCAMS AND HIGHLIGHTING  
FREE AND LOW-COST SCHOOL CHOICES**

*Advertisements to Run on Bus Shelters, Phone Kiosks, Subway Cars and in Newspapers*

*NYC Service Recruits Financial and Legal Expert Volunteers to Review Student Contracts*

Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Jonathan Mintz, New York State Education Commissioner John B. King, Jr., New York State Senator Kenneth P. LaValle, New York State Assembly Member Deborah J. Glick, New York City Department of Education (DOE) Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott, NYC Service Chief Service Officer Diahann Billings-Burford, Mayor’s Office of Adult Education Executive Director Tara Colton and Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) Executive Director Veronica M. White today announced the launch of the *Protect Your Money: Know Before You Enroll* campaign. This new campaign will educate New Yorkers about selecting a school or training program, advise them to be careful of taking on a large amount of school debt and encourage anyone who has had a negative experience to file a complaint by calling 311 or visiting [nyc.gov](http://nyc.gov).

“Unfortunately, difficult economic times sometimes draw out those who would take advantage of vulnerable New Yorkers, which is why we created our Citywide Protect Your Money campaign,” said DCA Commissioner Jonathan Mintz. “Our newest campaign installment, *Know Before You Enroll*,’ highlights the dangers of wasting hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars for degrees that prove useless, rather than accessing the many free and low-cost options that offer credible training.”

“It’s vital that the interests of students at proprietary schools and colleges are protected. The City is taking a major step toward doing just that,” said New York State Education Commissioner John B. King, Jr. “The City’s actions will help keep students informed and aware and help them avoid serious pitfalls on their way to a career. The next step is passage of the Quality and Excellence in Business and Trade Schools bill (S.4268-A/S.7859). The bill would give the State Education Department the tools and resources it needs to support and monitor the expanding proprietary school sector.”

“The law needs to be updated to provide the Bureau of Proprietary School Supervision of the State Education Department the flexibility it needs to adequately continue to supervise

proprietary schools, protect students and taxpayers, and preserve and strengthen this important educational and economic engine,” said New York State Senator Kenneth P. LaValle.

“I greatly appreciate the efforts of the City administration to inform the public of their educational options and call on my colleagues to support our legislation that would protect education consumers,” said New York State Assembly Member Deborah J. Glick.

“As more of our students graduate and move on to college and careers, we want to make sure they fully understand the financial implications associated with higher education and training,” said Schools Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott. “The ‘*Know Before You Enroll*’ campaign provides students with much needed information that will help them make the best decisions about their future.”

“We have incredible resources in this City that can be used to protect those who want to improve their lives from predatory institutions. We are making a call to action for financial and legal experts to volunteer in helping fellow New Yorkers navigate these education options and make the best decisions for their future and our City,” said Chief Service Officer Diahann Billings-Burford.

“New Yorkers looking to improve their skills too often enroll in programs that saddle them with debt without providing the jobs or advancement opportunities they were promised,” said Tara Colton, Executive Director of the Mayor’s Office of Adult Education. “This campaign lets New Yorkers know that they have access to a first-rate adult education and training system with hundreds of free and low-cost classes throughout the City.”

“Many young people recognize education as a pathway out of poverty,” said Veronica M. White, Executive Director of the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity. “The new ‘*Know Before You Enroll*’ campaign will help New Yorkers find affordable, high-quality training and education programs – and avoid taking on unnecessary debt.”

*Know Before You Enroll*, which features testimonials of real New Yorkers, will appear on bus shelters, phone kiosks, and subway cars, and will be featured in major daily and community newspapers. The campaign encourages New Yorkers to research training programs, explore free and low-cost education options, and get help understanding the school contracts that often come with thousands of dollars in debt. To help prospective students avoid taking on major school debt, NYC Service is launching a new initiative to identify volunteer financial and legal experts who can review enrollment contracts and loan applications with New Yorkers before they sign on the dotted line. The City also offers free help with debt and budgeting at the City’s Financial Empowerment Centers. The campaign emphasizes that students should only attend a licensed school and, even if a school is licensed, they should thoroughly research the program and know that they have the right to file a complaint.

Proprietary schools (both licensed and unlicensed) market their services through subway and bus ads, community newspapers, TV and radio, ethnic media, and community-based outreach mechanisms. Many students are unaware of free and low-cost education and training programs. At the same time, New Yorkers are enrolling in for-profit schools in growing

numbers. There are more than 500 licensed for-profit, non-degree-granting proprietary schools in New York State. Over 300 of these are in the five boroughs of New York City, as well as several dozen for-profit degree-granting schools. Schools offer various courses of study, from air conditioning repair and cosmetology to medical technician training and English language courses. An estimated 200,000 students attend for-profit schools throughout the state, and at least half of those – over 100,000 – live in New York City.

In May 2011, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs, Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Robert K. Steel, and Schools Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott announced a comprehensive review of the City's workforce training programs. One goal of this initiative was to create stronger oversight of proprietary schools to ensure that programs offer the greatest value for New Yorkers. The City has been working with the New York State Department of Education to closely monitor the approximately 300 licensed schools and numerous unlicensed schools that operate throughout the five boroughs. City residents spend tens of millions of dollars through both public and private funds to attend these schools each year, but have outcomes of varying quality.

The City is seeking, through advocacy efforts in Albany, a far greater ability to monitor, investigate and respond to complaints about schools, as well as to track school operations and student outcomes and hold proprietary schools to higher performance standards. The City has called upon the State Legislature to pass a bill sponsored by Assembly Member Glick and Senator LaValle that will improve accountability, quality, and consumer protections of non-degree-granting proprietary schools.

This campaign also supports work underway through the City's Young Men's Initiative, the nation's boldest and most comprehensive effort to tackle the broad disparities slowing the advancement of black and Latino young men. The *Know Before You Enroll* campaign will encourage young people throughout the City to spend their money wisely and make informed choices about training and education providers.

The campaign features the stories of real New Yorkers and the help available through City services and/or referrals. One ad features Garvin, a 26-year-old resident of Brooklyn, who completed a two-year Associate's degree at a school he saw advertised on television. After completing his Associate's degree and attempting to transfer to CUNY for his bachelor's degree, he discovered that his degree was not transferable and despite owing \$25,000 in student loans, he will have to start college over and enter CUNY as a freshman. Garvin visited one of the City's more than 20 Financial Empowerment Centers and received free, professional one-on-one financial counseling. By sharing these stories, the campaign aims to educate New Yorkers on how to avoid similar situations.

To view the new ads, visit [www.nyc.gov/ProtectYourMoney](http://www.nyc.gov/ProtectYourMoney). For additional information on adult education and training, visit [www.nyc.gov/adult-ed](http://www.nyc.gov/adult-ed). The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City is seeking private funds to help expand and enhance the *Know Before You Enroll* campaign. The Mayor's Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to supporting innovative public-private initiatives such as this campaign. For more information and to donate to this effort, call 311 or go to [www.nyc.gov/fund](http://www.nyc.gov/fund).

-30-

MEDIA CONTACT: Kay Sarlin / Abigail Lootens  
Department of Consumer Affairs  
(212) 487-4283