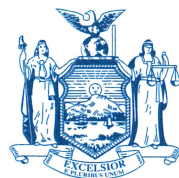


JOSEPH A. GRIFFO
SENATOR, 53RD DISTRICT
ASSISTANT MINORITY LEADER



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April 24, 2026

Mayor Zohran Mamdani
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Mamdani:

I am writing regarding your proposal to build a city-owned grocery store – the first of five you have promised – in East Harlem. While I recognize the need to ensure that New Yorkers have access to healthy and affordable food, I am concerned by the projected cost to build these stores (initially reported to be \$30 million for one store and \$70 million for all five stores) and the potential impact they will have on taxpayers already struggling with the high cost of living in the state, especially given that the state is already providing \$1.5 billion in additional, multi-year budget relief to the city.

As an alternative to your plan, I would suggest that you consider the model employed by a remarkable charitable organization in my Senate District, which includes all of Oneida and Madison and parts of Chenango and Herkimer counties. Compassion Coalition is an entrepreneurial-based, innovative nonprofit whose mission is to connect communities and serve those who are underprivileged or lack access to basic life necessities such as affordable food, clothing, housing, transportation, employment, and financial resources.

Through its Bargain Grocery store, Compassion Coalition has developed a model that allows individuals who are food insecure to shop with dignity. By partnering with national and local vendors to purchase overstock food and accept corporate donations, Bargain Grocery sells products at prices typically lower than big box stores. Additionally, the store provides workforce development opportunities and meaningfully reduces food waste and its associated environmental impact.

Compassion Coalition is financially supported by Bargain Grocery, which allows the organization to be self-sustaining. The organization has demonstrated that it is possible to provide healthy and affordable food options without government ownership or placing additional burdens on already overburdened taxpayers. I urge you to consider what Compassion Coalition has accomplished in Central New York and the Mohawk Valley as you continue to move forward with the City's municipal grocery store program.

I would like to personally invite you to visit Bargain Grocery and meet directly with the leadership of Compassion Coalition. Seeing their operation firsthand would provide valuable insight into how this model could be replicated or adapted to serve New Yorkers across the five boroughs. I would be happy to arrange and accompany you on such a visit at your convenience.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact my office for additional information about Compassion Coalition and Bargain Grocery, or to schedule a visit, upon request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph A. Griffo".

Joseph A. Griffo
New York State Senator, 53rd Senate District

