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9th Annual NYIC City Advocacy Day: March for Immigrant New York New York City, March 10, 2009

2009 CITY BUDGET & LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES:

At this time of economic crisis, the city has an historic opportunity to set the standard for responsible government and work in partnership with immigrant communities. Immigrants are workers, consumers, business owners and taxpayers, and are part of the solution in creating a better, fairer, stronger New York. We call on City Hall to create a 21st-century workforce development initiative, generate increased revenues and protect vital services, so all New Yorkers can leverage their strength, commitment to hard work, and entrepreneurial spirit in order to survive the current downturn and rebuild the city's economy. Some specific prescriptions include:

Support ESL as a Major Workforce Development Strategy for Immigrant Workers

Immigrants recognize that learning to speak English is the single most important thing they can do to succeed economically in America. Currently, fewer than 60,000 spots are available in affordable, government-funded adult English classes, meanwhile there are nearly 2 million limited-English-proficient adults residing in the city. **We urge the City to address immigrants' needs by committing to fully restore the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) at \$11.25 million and the Adult Literacy Initiative at \$1.5 million.**

Support Vital Programs for Low-Wage Workers

Immigrant workers constitute half of the city's workforce, but they face some of the harshest working conditions, toil extremely long hours, and are concentrated in low-wage jobs where employers often fail to pay workers the minimum wage or to pay them at all. The city is also facing an epidemic of workplace injuries and fatalities at construction sites, where 75% of victims have been immigrant and non-union workers. **We urge Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council to fund community job centers with strong ESL, health and safety education, and worker legal services programs that target low-wage workers throughout New York City.**

Improve Educational Outcomes for Immigrant & ELL Students

Over half of New York City children come from immigrant families and more than half of New York City school parents are not native English speakers. There are nearly 150,000 English Language Learner students (ELLs) in New York City, representing 14% of the total student population. **Barely a quarter of ELL students graduate within four years. More than half (50.5%) of ELLs in New York City never earn a diploma. In order to help create a strong workforce for the 21st Century we urge the City to stop the dropout crisis facing ELL students and help newly arrived immigrant students and those with an interrupted education.**

Assure Immigrants Access to Health Care: Uphold the Law and Preserve the Safety Net

Access to health care is a critical issue for all New Yorkers. Noncitizens are 3.5 times more likely than citizens to lack insurance and are less likely to seek medical care, including emergency care. Many are afraid to access government services and programs, and lack clear information about their rights or the safety of using health care and insurance programs. **We urge the City to uphold local laws meant to improve immigrants' access to health care and health insurance through the provision of language assistance services. The NYIC also seeks support from City Council for the Immigrant Health Access and Advocacy Collaborative. Finally, we propose a workforce development initiative to bring bilingual immigrants into the health care field.**

Promote Affordable Housing & Access to Housing Services

Immigrants have reversed the tide of decline and abandonment in many New York neighborhoods. Without immigrants, the city would have faced population decline, housing abandonment, and a far harsher economic climate. **We urge the City to help build and maintain affordable housing in all five boroughs and to shape its responses to the current economic crisis in a way that creates permanent affordable housing for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers.**

Ensure Park Accessibility: Immigrants & Parks Collaborative

Parks are our city's public spaces. Regardless of background, neighbors rely on parks to strengthen social ties and improve physical and emotional well-being. **The Immigrants & Parks Collaborative aims to ensure that our city's open spaces are accessible by all, representative of neighbors' wants and needs, and relevant to all New Yorkers.**

For more information please contact the New York Immigration Coalition at 212-627-2227 or go to www.thenyic.org