

A BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF IMMIGRANTS:

Key Proposals to Ensure NYC's 2017 Budget Responds to the Needs of Immigrant New Yorkers

May 2016



Executive Summary

New York City is globally renowned for embracing and integrating millions of immigrant residents, who are at the heart of the city's tremendous cultural, social, and economic vibrancy. Citywide, immigrants represent 37 percent of the population, 45 percent of the workforce, and 49 percent of small business owners.¹ In recent years, New York City (NYC) has taken tremendous steps forward to make itself welcoming to immigrants, including creating a municipal identification card (IDNYC), curtailing cooperation with federal immigration enforcement that undermines community-police relations, expanding access to pre-kindergarten and community schools, connecting thousands of immigrant New Yorkers to free, comprehensive immigration legal services, and more. Clearly under the leadership of Mayor Bill de Blasio, Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Finance Chair Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, and Immigration Chair Carlos Menchaca, NYC is headed in the right direction.

Still, much work remains to be done to ensure that immigrant New Yorkers have access to all the opportunities they need. Whether it be the child studying in the overcrowded, ill-equipped classroom, the limited-English proficient parent struggling to find work because she cannot find an affordable English class, or the working-class family facing displacement from its rapidly-gentrifying neighborhood, immigrants across NYC have tremendous unmet needs, and barriers to meeting them, that require special attention.

The upcoming NYC budget for Fiscal Year 2017 marks a tremendous opportunity to take further steps to address the needs of immigrant New Yorkers. This report from the Asian American Federation (AAF), Coalition for Asian-American Children and Families (CACF), Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA), Make the Road New York (MRNY), and New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) highlights budget priorities for working-class immigrant New Yorkers that emanate from these organizations' extensive community engagement and deep issue expertise.

The list is not exhaustive, but rather highlights key items that Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Mark-Viverito, Finance Chair Ferreras-Copeland, and the members of the City Council should carefully consider. Recently, Speaker Mark-Viverito and the Council issued their budget response, and the authors commend them for prioritizing initiatives for immigrant New Yorkers. Drawing from that response and this report, those completing the NYC budget should take the necessary actions to ensure that the final product prioritizes the needs and interests of immigrant communities as much as possible.

Key Proposals for a 2016 Budget for the City of Immigrants

Immigrant Services

- Provide \$16 million in funding for adult literacy for immigrants and other adults who need to improve their skills to access better jobs and support their families;
- Provide \$10 million for ActionNYC to prepare New Yorkers for the implementation of the President's 2014 Executive Actions on immigration and to continue to assist New Yorkers with DACA, adjustment of status, and naturalization applications;
- Renew and base-line funding for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project at \$7.1 million;
- Fund and base-line \$2 million to continue to support legal and other social services to unaccompanied minors facing deportation;
- Support those facing deportation that are not served by current funding streams with \$13.5 million to support immigration legal services for complex cases; and
- Maintain funding levels for the municipal ID program (IDNYC) implementation to continue meeting demand and providing high quality service citywide.

Strong Workforce

- Resource NYC's new Office of Labor Standards to provide robust support for low wage workers and responsible employers who struggle to compete against low-road competitors;
- Invest \$2 million in the Labor Standards Collaborative network of community based organizations and legal service providers to educate and support low-wage immigrant workers to blow the whistle on wage theft and exploitation;
- Increase Commission on Human Rights funding by \$5 million;
- Include sufficient resources for the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to enforce workers' paid sick leave protections and inform workers of their rights;
- Strengthen the existing day laborer center network by committing \$1.8 million in the budget;
- Allocate \$6.8 million for the Jobs to Build On initiative; and
- Allocate \$3.8 million to enhance the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative.

Policing and Restorative Justice

- Provide \$93.8 million in Summer Youth Employment Program funding to increase the number of program slots to 60,000, with a clear plan to baseline funding for 100,000 slots by FY2019;
- Implement a citywide Whole-School Restorative Justice Program, at a cost of \$89.95 million for 514 schools; and
- Invest \$4.325 million to expand Student Success Centers and year-round College Bridge programs to reach nearly 20,000 high school students.

Affordable and Safe Housing

- Invest in affordable housing construction that prioritizes units for the lowest-income New Yorkers (20 percent of Area Median Income and below) that will be permanently affordable;

- Guarantee a right to counsel for all New York tenants living under 200 percent of the federal poverty line by allocating \$199 million for this purpose;
- Continue to deliver on NYC’s promise of a \$36 million anti-displacement legal services effort and \$5 million for community outreach efforts, invest new resources in tenant organizing by community organizations to prevent displacement, and expand these efforts in proportion with new rezoning announcements;
- Allocate \$13.5 million for anti-displacement efforts in areas affected by prior rezonings;
- Maintain the current funding levels of the Housing Preservation Initiative (HPI);
- Fund the Alternative Enforcement Program at a level that enables it to continue to cover 250 buildings;
- Increase funding for the Emergency Repair Program initiative to ensure effective citywide enforcement;
- Allocate resources to focus greater enforcement attention for repair of dangerous asthma-triggering underlying conditions within residents’ homes; and
- Address the tremendous needs in the NYCHA system by investing \$1 billion in capital improvements for the NYCHA system.

Education

- Move forward with the investment of \$868 million in capital funding for the construction of new classrooms and schools to combat overcrowding and pursue additional means to meet the more than 100,000 seats needed citywide;
- Deepen investment in community schools by providing funds to expand to 200 community schools;
- Include \$40 million for expanded learning time and summer programs and \$20 million for teams of expert teachers and principals in the lowest-performing schools;
- Create \$2.25 million Parent Engagement Innovation Fund to pilot national models for parent engagement; and
- Expand NYC’s free school lunch program to all public school students.

Health

- Allocate \$5 million for the Access Health NYC Initiative;
- Continue providing funding for this non-insurance program directed towards uninsured or undocumented immigrants who are not eligible for health insurance through the New York State of Health Marketplace;
- Continue to allocate \$1.5 million in funding to the Immigrant Health Initiative;
- Provide \$89 million over four years to ensure every school is compliant with the State’s physical education minimum requirements;
- Increase funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) to \$22 million to support soup kitchens, food pantries and other emergency food providers; and
- Invest to keep hospital system functioning for our communities and providing critically needed health services to NYC’s neediest communities.

Civic Engagement

- Invest \$1 million to engage, educate, and mobilize 75,000 immigrant residents to register to vote;
- Increase funding for Student Voter Registration Day (SVRD) to \$1 million;
- Expand funding for Participatory Budgeting (PB) to \$1.12 million to meaningfully integrate immigrant communities into the process; and
- Revamp the Board of Elections through a \$20 million reforms package.

LGBTQ

- Invest \$1 million to fund specialized, culturally-competent LGBTQ immigration services provided by community-based organizations;
- Baseline \$1 million to support the creation and maintenance of Gender Sexuality Alliances in NYC public schools; and
- Invest \$1 million for hate violence response and prevention for the LGBTQ community, to be allocated to community-based organizations and awareness efforts.

Newcomer Communities Capacity-Building

- Increase the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund from \$2.5 million to \$5 million to help build the capacity of community organizations that serve NYC's Black, Latino, Asian, and immigrant communities;
- Amend NYC's contracting policies to provide opportunities for smaller, immigrant-led nonprofit organizations serving communities of color to enable them to compete with large nonprofit groups;
- Strengthen and expand NYC's language access policy under Executive Order 120 to ensure the provision of translation and interpretation services at City agencies and expand the scope beyond the top six languages by to encompass growing immigrant communities throughout NYC; and
- Increase programmatic support for public libraries throughout NYC.

The Asian American Federation, the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, the Federation for Protestant Welfare Agencies, Make the Road New York, and the New York Immigration Coalition wish to thank the Fiscal Policy Institute for its support in producing this report. In addition, we thank the following organizations for their help in providing data, testimonials, draft reviews, and other invaluable assistance to this report: Arab American Family Support Center, Atlas: DIY, CAAV, Center for an Urban Future, Central American Legal Assistance, Coalition for Educational Justice, Common Cause New York, Community Service Society of New York, Community Voices Heard, Communities United for Police Reform, Fiscal Policy Institute, Legal Aid Society, Lutheran Social Services of New York, MinKwon Center for Community Action, New York City Coalition for Adult Literacy, NYC Legal Service Provider Advocacy Collaborative, Real Affordability for All Coalition, The Door - A Center of Alternatives, United Neighborhood Houses, and Urban Youth Collaborative.

1. Immigrant Services

- Provide \$16 million in funding for adult literacy for immigrants and other adults who need to improve their skills to access better jobs and support their families;
- Provide \$10 million for ActionNYC to prepare New Yorkers for the implementation of the President's 2014 Executive Actions on immigration and to continue to assist New Yorkers with DACA, adjustment of status, and naturalization applications;
- Renew and base-line funding for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project at \$7.1 million;
- Fund and base-line \$2 million to continue to support legal and other social services to unaccompanied minors facing deportation;
- Support those facing deportation that are not served by current funding streams with \$13.5 million to support immigration legal services for complex cases; and
- Maintain funding levels for the municipal ID (IDNYC) program implementation to continue meeting demand and providing high quality service citywide.

For many years, but particularly under the leadership of Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Mark-Viverito, Finance Chair Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, and Immigration Chair Carlos Menchaca, NYC has set a higher standard for how municipalities serve, engage, and protect immigrant residents. From the nation's largest municipal ID program to the nation's first immigration public defender program for low-income and detained immigrants, NYC is a national trailblazer in developing innovative immigrant-focused initiatives.

Despite these significant and transformational investments, immigrant New Yorkers continue to lack sufficient access to vital legal and educational services. The NYC budget must continue to deepen its commitment to expanding immigrant-serving programming and ensuring that the many diverse City-funded programs currently operating are best leveraged to be mutually supportive. New investment must be broad and flexible, and focused on empowering community-based organizations, which are best-equipped to respond to the ever-changing and myriad service needs of immigrants on the ground. With these resources in place, NYC can move towards even greater support of immigrant New Yorkers seeking to keep their families together, a path to integration, and better lives in NYC.

First, **NYC must address the crisis facing 2.2 million adult New Yorkers who lack English language proficiency, their high school diploma, or both, with a \$16 million base-lined investment in ESOL, BENL, ABE, and HSE preparation programs.** As a recent report by Make the Road New York and the Center for Popular Democracy, "Teaching Toward Equity: The Importance of English Classes to Worker and Family Economic Stability in New York," found, adult literacy is essential for tackling income inequality and building family economic stability. The report also finds that "by bringing all LEP individuals to English proficiency, the city's current LEP population could see a cumulative increase in earnings of \$3.1 to \$5.8 billion."²

With less than four percent of those in need able to access community-based adult education services, NYC is limiting one of the strongest pathways towards immigrant integration, economic mobility, community safety, and parent-child engagement. Beginning to close this gap and move towards universal adult literacy access is a strategic one for NYC. It amounts to smart fiscal policy given that every high school credential earned generates

NYC approximately \$324,000 in net benefits over an individual’s lifetime.³ Such an investment will also strengthen and allow for the long-term success of mayoral policy priorities, including Universal Pre-Kindergarten, Career Pathways, and the greater fight against inequality.

Table 1: Adult Literacy Needs in NYC

Total NYC Adult Population (age 19 and older) ⁴	6,451,000
Total Population (age 19 or older) Lacking a High School Diploma, English Language Proficiency or Both ⁵	2,225,000
Total Number of ESOL, BENL, ABE, or HSE Prep Seats in NYC ⁶	61,000
Percentage of NYC Adult Population Lacking Skills to Succeed	34%
Percentage of NYC Adults Able to Access Educational Programs	Less than 3%

Second, **NYC must renew and expand investment to \$10 million for ActionNYC**, a program led by the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs in partnership with a number of community-based organizations citywide. This program has already met the needs of thousands of immigrants citywide, and it is also poised to offer a robust and immediate response to the implementation of President Obama’s 2014 Executive Actions (DAPA and Expanded DACA) should an injunction be lifted by the Supreme Court in spring 2016. ActionNYC serves primarily as an outreach and case management vehicle for immigrant New Yorkers, and ensuring that those reached through ActionNYC are ultimately able to receive legal help is critical. Expanded funds should allow for additional community navigators and immigration lawyers to be hired to assist more people, as well as to include additional organizations representing the full diversity of our immigrant city.

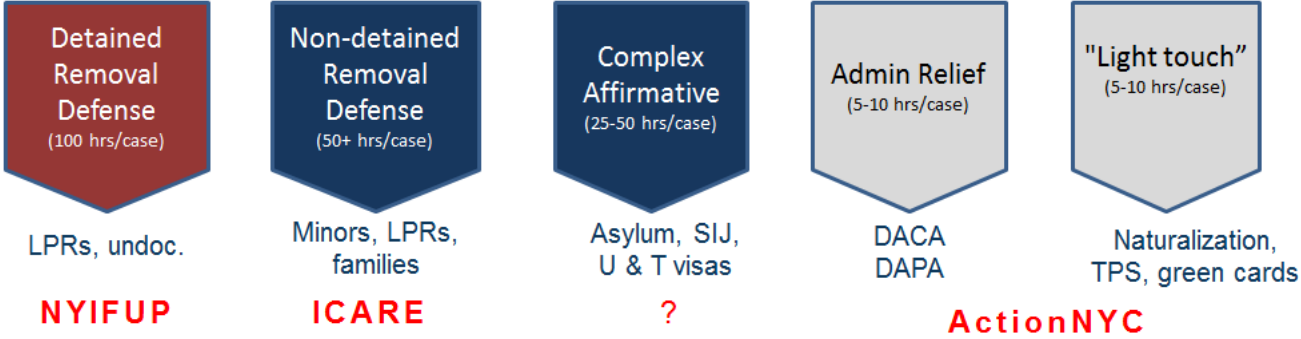
Third, **the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) must be renewed and base-lined at \$7.1 million**. As the first program in the nation to guarantee representation to low-income immigrant New Yorkers facing deportation, NYIFUP has served more than 1,450 immigrants since its start in FY 2014 and obtained complex relief for 452 individuals. Without legal representation, only three percent of those who are detained and facing deportation receive favorable outcomes in their cases. An individual is ten times more likely to prevail in their case if they have a lawyer,⁷ which is why NYIFUP is critical to keeping immigrant families together in NYC.

Fourth, **NYC must extend its support for New York’s most vulnerable by base-lining \$2 million to support the Unaccompanied Minors Initiative**. This critical initiative allows NYC to hold strong to its pledge that every unaccompanied child facing deportation in NYC will have an attorney. With an increase in child arrivals expected during FY 2017 as violence in

regions such as Central America’s Northern Triangle worsens, funding that allows expert attorneys to help children navigate their complex legal cases and connect them to social service supports is more vital than ever. Family units that arrive to New York under a different designation from the federal government, but whose need is no less severe, must also receive support. The Initiative currently earmarks \$500,000 for such representation and should continue to do so in the coming Budget.

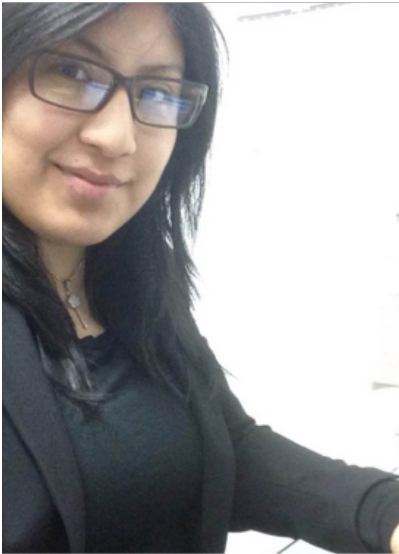
Fifth, the NYC Budget must recognize that while the above legal remedies are critical, they are often focused on particular populations requiring unique interventions. At present, there is far too little funding to support complex immigration legal cases where an individual is facing imminent deportation and cannot be served under funding streams such as ActionNYC. In order to address this need, **NYC should increase funding for the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) to \$13.5 million, with a focus on supporting complex-case representation.** Such an investment would allow providers the necessary resources to respond quickly to shifting trends and allow them to maximize their expertise and knowledge of the communities they serve. It would also allow investments such as ActionNYC to be more meaningful and significant, as more of those reached through its successful outreach could be directed to expert legal representation.

Figure 1: NYC Council Budget Response Graphic Regarding Funding Gaps for Complex Immigration Cases



A New York City Council graphic from its Response to the Mayor’s FY 2017 Preliminary Budget identifying the lack of dedicated municipal funding for complex, affirmative cases that account for approximately 60 percent of all pending cases. As a clarification, ICARE only covers cases for unaccompanied minors and adults with children. For others facing deportation who are not detained, there is also no dedicated municipal funding.

Funding for complex services that falls outside the scope of current available funding would help New Yorkers like Irma (who prefers not to have her last name identified), who came to the United States from Mexico when she was only six years old. Having previously lived with her father, who abused and neglected her, she arrived to live with her mother on Staten Island in 2002. Because Irma entered the country without being apprehended, she was never put into removal proceedings, but she remained undocumented. When Irma was 18 years old, she happened to be volunteering at a foreclosure and immigration legal clinic and met a lawyer from Lutheran Social Services of New York (LSSNY). The LSSNY lawyer determined that Irma was eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, a complex



Pictured: Irma was able to receive complex immigration legal representation, and it has changed her life.

form of immigration relief available to undocumented youth who are unable to reunify with one or both parents on account of their maltreatment.

After litigating Irma's case in Richmond County Family Court, and then before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, LSSNY helped Irma obtain a lawful permanent residency status in December 2015. With her status, Irma became eligible for federal financial aid for her collegiate studies. She will graduate from College of Staten Island with a degree in Spanish Adolescent Education this summer. Her status also allowed her to obtain her teaching certification, and this past February she fulfilled her lifelong dream and began working as a Spanish education teacher at a Staten Island school. Irma's case shows the tremendous potential of further support for complex immigration case representation.

Finally, **NYC must maintain funding for its enormously successful municipal ID program ("IDNYC")** and continue to encourage more New Yorkers to apply. As more cities across the country and the world follow in NYC's footsteps, ensuring that the program continues to meet demand is critical.

2. Strong Workforce

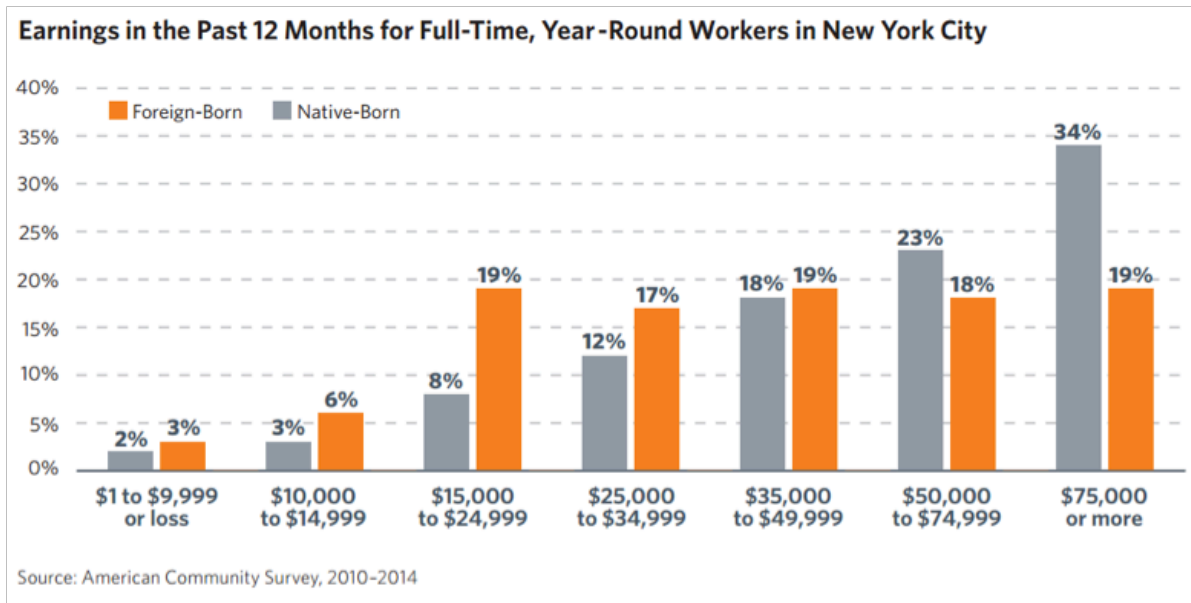
- Resource NYC’s new Office of Labor Standards to provide robust support for low wage workers and responsible employers who struggle to compete against low-road competitors;
- Invest \$2 million in the Labor Standards Collaborative network of community based organizations and legal service providers to educate and support low wage immigrant workers to blow the whistle on wage theft and exploitation;
- Increase Commission on Human Rights funding by \$5 million;
- Include sufficient resources for DCA to enforce workers’ paid sick leave protections and inform workers of their rights;
- Strengthen the existing day laborer center network by committing \$1.8 million in the budget;
- Allocate \$6.8 million for the Jobs to Build On initiative; and
- Allocate \$3.8 million to enhance the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative.

If there were ever any doubt that New York is a city of immigrants, a brief survey of NYC’s workforce would dispel any uncertainty. While immigrants make up approximately 37 percent of NYC’s population, they comprise half of the NYC’s workforce (47 percent) and participate in the workforce at higher rates than native-born New Yorkers.⁸ The health of NYC’s economy is interlinked with the immigrant workforce, as a well-equipped and educated immigrant workforce will create shared prosperity for all New Yorkers.

While immigrants play a necessary role in New York’s robust economy, the economic conditions of the immigrant workforce are seldom addressed. While we applaud Mayor de Blasio’s holistic and career-focused approach to workforce development, NYC’s working immigrants still face many barriers in accessing dignified and safe employment that allow upward financial mobility. Immigrant New Yorkers are disproportionately concentrated in low-wage sectors of the economy. Immigrant households continue to earn less than native-born households (see Table 2).⁹ And many of NYC’s workforce development programs are inaccessible to immigrants due to language access issues and other impediments. These barriers are exacerbated for the approximately 574,000¹⁰ undocumented immigrants living in New York. Undocumented immigrants face many of the same issues that are faced by other immigrant and low-wage workers, but they are at higher risk for experiencing unsafe workplace conditions, wage-theft, workplace injuries, and criminalization by law enforcement agencies.¹¹

Take for example Luis Sanchez, a day laborer working in Jackson Heights for the last 14 years. Luis works to pick up temporary construction jobs on the corner of Roosevelt Ave and 179th Street in Jackson Heights. He specializes in sheet-rocking and framing. Since the economic downturn of 2008 Luis and his co-workers have noticed fewer employers stopping by the corners and, for the ones that do, there has been an increase in wage theft and employer abuse. In Luis’s own words “Seven years ago things started getting tough—so what happens, the employers start abusing, they don’t pay people or pay them less. And they always find an excuse to not pay...The contractor does not see that when they rob 50 dollars or 500 dollars from a person they are robbing from that worker’s kids as well. It’s a domino effect.”

Table 2: Earnings for Full-time Workers in New York, Foreign-born vs. Native-born



Day laborers like Luis are mostly recently-arrived immigrant workers who congregate in public spaces, street corners, or Home Depot parking lots to access manual jobs such as construction, moving, landscaping, and house cleaning. Yet day laborers in NYC face daily, serious challenges. It is estimated that one in two day laborers has experienced or will experience wage theft at some point.¹²

The solutions to the issues faced by New York’s immigrant workforce need to be multiple, culturally competent, and accessible - there is not one program or initiative that can address all of the barriers faced by immigrant workers. While NYC’s career ladder and bridge programs are valuable resources for those seeking training and support to advance in a particular career, initiatives like the Worker Cooperatives Business Development Initiative (WCBDI) offer alternatives to those traditional workforce development approaches. WCBDI funds nonprofit organizations that provide training and technical support to immigrants, low-income people, and people of color and support the development of worker cooperatives - businesses that are democratically-owned and -controlled by workers. This initiative provides access to entrepreneurial opportunities to communities that have not had access to such prospects. Some success from the first two years of this initiative have included the development of a cleaning co-op created by undocumented immigrants in Sunset Park, Brooklyn and what will become a cooperatively-run beauty salon owned by transgender Latina women at Make the Road New York.

Several measures can be taken by NYC to support immigrant working New Yorkers and address the barriers to their development.

First, **NYC’s new Office of Labor Standards must be resourced to provide robust support for low wage workers and responsible employers who struggle to compete against low-road competitors.**

Second, **NYC must invest \$2 million in the Labor Standards Collaborative network** of community based organizations and legal service providers to educate and support low

wage immigrant workers to blow the whistle on wage theft and exploitation. This initiative will increase the power of low-wage and immigrant laborers in NYC to demand better opportunities and working conditions while redressing employer abuse when it occurs.

Third, **funding for the Commission on Human Rights must be increased by \$5 million.** This entity is critical for protecting immigrant workers from discrimination, and the budget increase will ensure that the rights of all New Yorkers are protected and that anti-discrimination protections are effectively enforced across NYC on grounds of national origin, as well as race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and more.

Fourth, **NYC's Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) must have the resources necessary to continue to advance its work on paid sick days and informing community members about their rights.** In the past years, DCA has led efforts to conduct outreach to working New Yorkers about their rights and enforce the law when employers fail to comply. The budget should include sufficient resources for DCA to be able to enforce workers' rights on paid sick days and other related initiatives.

Fifth, **NYC must respond to the needs of the nearly 10,000 day laborers in New York City by investing \$1.8 million in the Day Laborer Workforce Initiative.** Day laborers are often not paid at all for weeks, or even months, and in other cases they are paid below the legal minimum. These workers also face serious workplace accidents and hazards, including exposure to chemicals, dust and toxic emissions, use of faulty equipment, and lack of protective gear and safety equipment. NYC's day laborers also lack workforce training, skills development, and needed health and safety training. To make matters worse, day laborers often go without access to basic infrastructure—for example, enduring extreme temperatures and lack of access to bathrooms. **NYC can and must do better for its day laborers and can begin by strengthening the existing day laborer centers and creating new centers in all five boroughs.**

NYC must also do more in the area of workforce development. One key program has been the Jobs to Build On Initiative, which prepares low-income community members and connects them to good jobs. **NYC must renew funding of \$6.8 million for the Jobs to Build On initiative** to support the bilingual job readiness training, employment counseling, job placement, and retention support necessary for citywide workforce development.

Finally, NYC must expand funding to the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative, which supports the growth of cooperative businesses. Such cooperatives provide a path for low-income and immigrant New Yorkers to access employment, build wealth, and gain entrepreneurial skills. **NYC must allocate \$3.8 million to enhance the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative** to provide for the incubation of new worker cooperative small business, create employment opportunities for new worker-owners, assist existing cooperatives, and conduct outreach to cooperative entrepreneurs.

3. Youth, Policing, and Restorative Justice

- Provide \$93.8 million in Summer Youth Employment Program funding to increase the number of program slots to 60,000, with a clear plan to baseline funding for 100,000 slots by FY2019;
- Implement a citywide Whole-School Restorative Justice Coordinator Program, at a cost of \$89.95 million for 514 schools; and
- Invest \$4.325 million to expand Student Success Centers and Year-Round College Bridge programs to reach nearly 20,000 high school students.

NYC continues to be plagued by racially-disparate policing that results in the mass criminalization of people of color, including immigrants, and police violence that devastates communities. The deaths of Eric Garner, Ramarley Graham, Akai Gurley, and many more in recent years underscore the life-and-death consequences of our broken police and criminal justice systems. And, every day, more young people of color are driven away from schools and towards prisons.

While NYC has adopted certain reforms (e.g. curtailing Stop and Frisk and passing the first two pieces of the Community Safety Act), much remains to be done. The continuation of Broken Windows policing still wreaks havoc on communities of color, with young people regularly stopped, harassed, and criminalized by police. While efforts to pass the Right to Know Act continue, police officers still do not introduce themselves and explain their reasons for stopping civilians, leading to frequent violations of New Yorkers' constitutional rights.

Moreover, racially-disparate policing and criminal justice practices reinforce the school-to-prison pipeline, through which young people get pushed out of school and into the criminal justice system. With hundreds of millions of dollars being pumped into school discipline—through the hiring of School Safety Officers and the ramping up of NYPD presence in our schools—young people of color and immigrants are all too often treated more as criminals-in-training than as scholars-in-development. As the data in Table 3 show, black and Latino students, many of whom are immigrants, are more likely to be suspended in middle and high school than their white peers.

Simultaneously, there exists a dearth of constructive opportunities for young people to develop the skills and work experience they need to thrive. While the Summer Youth Employment Program served more than 54,000 young people in 2016 following strong advocacy by the City Council, this covered only 41 percent of the total applicants. Immigrant communities and communities of color need greater investments in young people.



Pictured: MRNY Youth Power Project member Zaire Kiran speaks out against the criminalization of young people of color.

Table 3: Racially-disparate School Suspensions in Sixth to Eighth Grade¹³

How Many Times More Likely Students of Color Are to be Suspended Twice or More (ratio)	
Black : White Girls	7.9
Latina : White Girls	2.9
Black : White Boys	3.4
Latino : White Boys	Less than 3%

Zaire Kiran, a 15-year old daughter of Trinidadian immigrants, 9th Grader at Nelson Mandela High School, and an MRNY Youth Power Project member, said, “Being a black girl in school is hard and the stereotypes and bias we face are often overlooked. Black girls are treated differently than white girls and data proves that is a reality. In NYC, black girls in sixth to eighth grades are eight times as likely as white girls to be suspended twice or more. Being black is the biggest indicator that you will be suspended or arrested in school. The majority of suspensions and criminal summons are not for violent and dangerous reasons—they are for minor infractions like defying authority or disorderly conduct, which the Secretary of Education and Attorney General have said are biased and unfairly impact black students. At school, we are looked at like we are always about to cause trouble. If we speak up for ourselves, they say it’s defiant.”

The NYC budget offers an opportunity for NYC to push back against the school-to-prison pipeline that Zaire and her peers experience, and instead prioritize investing in immigrant young people and youth of color more broadly. The budget should ensure that these young people are on the right track by investing in restorative justice approaches that repair harm and bring together members of our community to make them whole. Key elements in the 2016-17 budget should include the following:

First, **NYC must expand summer youth opportunities by providing \$93.8 million in Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) funding** to increase the number of program slots to 60,000, with a clear plan to baseline funding for 100,000 slots by FY2019. SYEP has a strong track record of success in engaging young people in constructive summer opportunities, and NYC should expand its commitment to the program.

Second, **NYC must deepen its commitment to Restorative Justice initiatives by implementing a citywide Whole-School Restorative Justice Program, at a cost of \$89.95 million for 514 schools.** Restorative Justice is the best approach for ensuring a positive school climate and reversing the criminalization of young people in our schools, and the City Council’s FY 2016 initiative has shown its promise. NYC should commit fully to a citywide approach.

Third, **NYC must invest \$4.325 million to expand Student Success Centers and Year-Round College Bridge programs to reach nearly 20,000 high school students.** Youth of color and immigrant youth all too often do not receive the support they need for true college readiness and application support, and Student Success Centers and Bridge programs help fill that gap. NYC should ensure that these effective models are growing across the five boroughs.

4. Affordable and Safe Housing

- Invest in affordable housing construction that prioritizes units for the lowest-income New Yorkers (20 percent of Area Median Income and below) that will be permanently affordable;
- Guarantee a right to counsel for all New York tenants living under 200 percent of the federal poverty line by allocating \$199 million for this purpose;
- Continue to deliver on NYC’s promise of a \$36 million anti-displacement legal services effort and \$5 million for community outreach efforts, invest new resources in tenant organizing by community organizations to prevent displacement, and expand these efforts in proportion with new rezoning announcements;
- Allocate \$13.5 million for anti-displacement efforts in areas affected by prior rezonings;
- Maintain the current funding levels of the Housing Preservation Initiative (HPI);
- Fund the Alternative Enforcement Program at a level that enables it to continue to cover 250 buildings;
- Increase funding for the Emergency Repair Program initiative to ensure effective citywide enforcement;
- Allocate resources to focus greater enforcement attention for repair of dangerous asthma-triggering underlying conditions within residents’ homes; and
- Address the tremendous needs in the NYCHA system by investing \$1 billion in capital improvements to the NYCHA system.

Immigrant communities cannot thrive in NYC if families cannot remain in their homes or find an affordable place to live. In recent years, the cost of housing in NYC has increased tremendously, while wages have remained stagnant for working-class people—particularly for workers in low-wage sectors. Moreover, demographic growth across NYC will also increase the housing shortage and produce higher competition for apartments that will likely deepen tenant insecurity and landlord abuse.

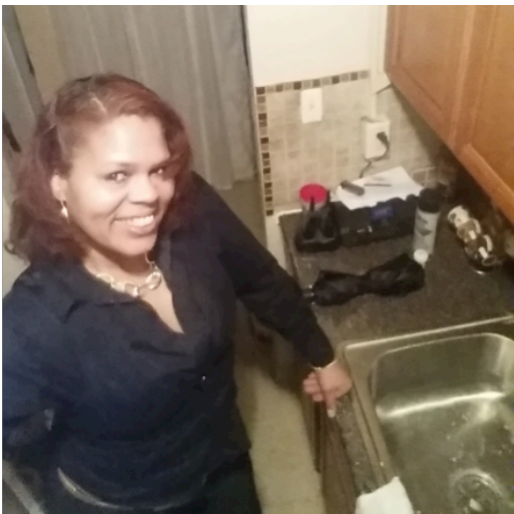
Much of the problem is due to New York State’s failure to protect immigrant tenants. In 2015, the rent laws were renewed without any substantial improvements for tenants—tens of thousands of rent-stabilized units will be lost each year due to vacancy de-control, and landlords are still able to precipitously raise rents and push out even more tenants through the “eviction bonus” (also known as the “vacancy bonus,” through which landlords can increase rents by 20 percent once the apartment has become vacant) and the preferential rent loophole. In the absence of State action to strengthen the Rent Laws, NYC immigrant tenants will remain at risk.

Nonetheless, action from City government remains critical to ensuring that immigrant communities can remain intact and prosper. Mayor de Blasio has called for the construction and preservation of 200,000 units of affordable housing over the course of a decade. And, recently, the City Council approved his modified Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) plan that will facilitate the rezoning of neighborhoods across the five boroughs.

As NYC proceeds with plans to build and preserve affordable housing, it must take

actions to prioritize lower-income residents who are all too often forced out of their homes by landlords and who are rarely served by new housing developments—which are typically priced well above their incomes. NYC must prioritize developing housing that ensures real, deep affordability—that includes a substantial portion of units for tenants with incomes at 20 per cent of Area Median Income and below—and take measures to prevent landlord abuse and displacement that afflicts immigrant communities, and that could be exacerbated by rezonings. Moreover, NYC must act to guarantee that the housing stock remains free of health and safety violations so that all tenants can live safe, healthy lives.

To understand the problems low-income tenants face, consider the case of Dulce Maria Rivera, a Make the Road New York member who lives in Staten Island with her daughter. Dulce Maria has spent six years trying to get her landlord to address serious health hazards in the apartment, including broken heating and hot water system, mold in the cabinets, and persistent rodent infestations. Any repairs have been cosmetic, leaving behind serious underlying conditions that have exacerbated Dulce Maria’s asthma and her hospitalization. Tenants like Dulce Maria have already suffered greatly from landlord negligence, and, in Staten Island, with rezoning imminent, will likely face increased efforts to pressure them to leave so that building owners and developers can earn greater profits from new tenants and units.



Pictured: MRNY member Dulce Maria Rivera has experienced serious health hazards and landlord negligence in her Staten Island apartment.

Finally, NYC must take strong action to repair public housing and ensure its future. New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments house hundreds of thousands of NYC residents, including more than 50,000 immigrants. But far too many of these developments have fallen into disrepair, leaving New Yorkers living in unsafe, unhealthy conditions. The lack of funding from NYC, coupled with lack of support from state and federal government, has left unhealthy living conditions, with an increase in asthma and other respiratory disorders due to toxic mold and other environmental elements associated with substandard housing. Strong public housing is essential for maintaining affordable housing in NYC and addressing the shortfall. NYC’s budget process offers an opportunity to address these critical needs, and our government must take advantage of this opportunity.

Table 4: Immigrants and the Need for Affordable Housing¹⁴

Median Rent Burden of All Immigrant New Yorkers	34%
Median Rent Burden of Low-Income Immigrant New Yorkers	58%
Median Rent Burden of all New Yorkers	31%
Percent of immigrant households living in overcrowded units	17%
Percent of all New Yorkers' households living in overcrowded units	10%
Percentage of rent-regulated households that are immigrant-headed	50%
Percentage of public housing residents who are immigrants	30%

NYC must take strong action to address the affordable housing crisis in immigrant communities.

First, **NYC must invest in affordable housing construction that prioritizes units for the lowest-income New Yorkers (20 percent of Area Median Income and below) that will be permanently affordable.** Affordable housing must be truly affordable to low-income New Yorkers, and NYC must make the necessary investments to ensure it is.

Second, **NYC must guarantee a right to counsel for all New York tenants living under 200 percent of the federal poverty line by allocating \$199 million for this purpose.** Tenants suffer daily at the hands of unscrupulous landlords who seek to displace them. It's critical that all tenants have effective counsel to preserve our homes and neighborhoods.

Third, **NYC must continue to deliver on its promise of a \$36 million anti-displacement legal services effort and \$5 million for community outreach efforts, and expand both in proportion with new rezoning announcements.** NYC must also invest in tenant organizing by community organizations to prevent displacement. With the MIH plan now passed, rezonings may move forward quickly, and it is critical that legal services, outreach, and tenant organizing efforts be in place to protect current residents. Moreover, NYC must **allocate \$13.5 million for anti-displacement efforts in areas affected by prior rezonings.**

Fourth, **NYC must maintain the current funding levels of the Housing Preservation Initiative (HPI),** which supports community organizations across NYC to anticipate and address threats to affordable housing.

Fifth, **NYC must fund the Alternative Enforcement Program (AEP) at a level that enables it to continue to cover 250 buildings.** AEP has identified and addressed underlying conditions problems at NYC's most distressed buildings, and it should remain in place at its current scale to continue that important work.

Sixth, **NYC must increase funding for the Emergency Repair Program (ERP) initiative to ensure effective citywide enforcement.** ERP is a critical tool for HPD to take critical action to address emergencies when landlords fail to address emergency violations. Tenants living in dangerous conditions need additional support from ERP to be able to live safely in their homes again.

Seventh, **NYC must allocate resources to focus greater enforcement attention for repair of dangerous asthma-triggering underlying conditions within residents' homes.** All too often, landlords make small cover-up improvements (e.g., paint) to cover underlying conditions that make tenants' homes unhealthy—and often increase the prevalence of asthma in immigrant communities. Additional resources to address this problem are critical.

Eighth, **NYC must address the tremendous needs in the NYCHA system by investing \$1 billion in capital improvements for the NYCHA system.** NYCHA housing stock is in dire need of an infusion of resources, and NYC must deliver on meeting these needs for hundreds of thousands of NYC residents—30 percent of whom are immigrants.

5. Education

- Move forward with the investment of \$868 million in capital funding for the construction of new classrooms and schools to combat overcrowding and pursue additional means to meet the more than 100,000 seats needed citywide;
- Deepen investment in community schools by providing funds to expand to 200 community schools;
- Include \$40 million for expanded learning time and summer programs and \$20 million for teams of expert teachers and principals in the lowest-performing schools;
- Create a \$2.25 million Parent Engagement Innovation Fund to pilot national models for parent engagement;
- Invest \$8.5 million to expand NYC’s free school lunch program to all public school students; and
- Place teams of teacher leaders and Teacher Centers in all of the Renewal Schools.

Every child deserves access to high quality public education, and every parent deserves the opportunity to engage in the process. Under the de Blasio administration, NYC’s school system has taken important steps forward to improve the educational system for immigrant youth, but much work remains to be done. Too many New York families face overcrowded, under-resourced and unwelcoming school climates. Immigrant New York children and their families—and those of low- and moderate-income and/or limited English proficiency in particular—struggle to navigate the system and thrive in schools that don’t have enough support for families, let alone enough seats.

In NYC, nearly half of public school students speak a language other than English at home, and 12.5 percent are English Language Learners. Few of these students meet state standards in English Language Arts, and many take longer than four years to graduate high school.¹⁵ These students deserve the additional resources and supports necessary to ensure their success in the classroom.

Recently, NYC has made substantial strides in education—providing universal Pre-kindergarten, creating and expanding community schools, and recently promoting greater language access in schools. These initiatives have critically increased the accessibility of the education system to immigrant families. Community schools, for example, holistically address the needs of students, parents and community members while incorporating strong systems for student and parent engagement. This initiative has the potential to transform NYC education and must be elevated.

NYC must also tackle the critical problem of school overcrowding. As Make the Road New York’s 2015 report, “Where’s My Seat? How School Overcrowding Disproportionately Impacts Immigrant Communities in New York City” found, immigrant communities across NYC tend to be hit harder by school overcrowding, which has left a shortage of at least 100,000 new classroom seats citywide. Persistent overcrowding forces children to learn in trailers, hallways, and other spaces unfit for learning; eat lunch too early or late in the day to stay well-nourished and attentive; miss out on key enrichment activities like physical education, music, and arts; and travel long distances to get to and from school. It bears mention that, with new housing stock likely to emerge following neighborhood rezonings, there will be additional pressure on NYC’s already over-stressed school system, making the need for additional resources to address overcrowding even greater.

NYC's proposed capital investment of \$868 million in the construction of classrooms and schools marks progress toward addressing school overcrowding. That said, it will still leave tens of thousands of additional needed seats, meaning that the administration and the City Council will need to do even more to combat severe overcrowding in our public schools.

The overcrowding crisis has real impacts on children and families. Take the case of Celerina Marcelino, a MRNY member in Queens whose children study at overcrowded schools where some children have to eat lunch as early as 9:45am because of insufficient space and struggle to keep their attention on learning throughout the day. In schools like her children's, sufficient facilities for effective teaching and learning simply do not exist. As Celerina says, "parents like me need the attention of our elected officials to solve the overcrowding crisis and help our children."

The upcoming budget offers a tremendous opportunity to address these problems.

First, NYC must tackle the overcrowding crisis head on. **NYC must move forward with the investment of \$868 million in capital funding for the construction of new classrooms and schools** to combat overcrowding. NYC must also pursue additional means to meet the more than 100,000 seats needed citywide, as well as allocate additional resources for the creation and coordination of a task force to address this crisis.

Second, **NYC must deepen its investment in community schools by providing funds to expand to 200 community schools.** In concert with this effort, NYC must include **\$40 million for expanded learning time and summer programs and \$20 million for teams of expert teachers and principals in the lowest-performing schools.** Furthermore, to deepen the engagement of parents, NYC must create a **\$2.25 million Parent Engagement Innovation Fund to pilot national models for parent engagement.** These efforts should focus particular energy on engaging immigrant parents who face barriers to engagement with an unfamiliar and difficult-to-penetrate school system.

Third, **NYC must expand its free school lunch program to all public school students.** The City Council has estimated that a relatively small sum, \$8.75 million, would suffice to eliminate the school lunch fees in all schools for all students. For two years, NYC implemented an initiative in middle schools to provide free school lunches, which can ensure that more students are eating during the day and do away with the poverty stigma that can surround school lunch. NYC should implement this initiative for all NYC public school students.

Finally, while the DOE partners with school leaders and families in the School Renewal Program, **NYC must dedicate resources to the placement of teams of teacher leaders and Teacher Centers in all 94 Renewal Schools.** These schools require committed resources for educators to fully support renewal school students, the majority of which are students of color.



Pictured: Celerina Marcelino, a MRNY member, is worried about her children studying in overcrowded schools.

6. Access to Health Care

- Allocate \$5 million for the Access Health NYC Initiative;
- Continue providing funding for this non-insurance program directed towards uninsured or undocumented immigrants who are not eligible for health insurance through the New York State of Health Marketplace;
- Continue to allocate \$1.5 million in funding to the Immigrant Health Initiative;
- Provide \$89 million over four years to ensure every school is compliant with the State's physical education minimum requirements;
- Increase funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) to \$22 million to support soup kitchens, food pantries and other emergency food providers; and
- Invest to keep hospital system functioning for our communities and providing critically needed health services to NYC's neediest communities.

Promulgated in 2010, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) aimed to make health insurance coverage affordable and accessible for millions of Americans. Since its implementation, significant progress in coverage and access to health has been reported. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has estimated that as of March 2016, 20 million uninsured adults have gained health insurance coverage.¹⁶ NYC, in particular, has seen a decline of two percentage points from 2013 in its uninsured rate, bringing the uninsured rate down to 11.4 percent of the total population in 2014 (see Table 5 below).

The numbers make clear that NYC under the de Blasio administration has done a tremendous job in ensuring that residents of the five boroughs are able to enjoy their basic right to health care by establishing crucial programs.

Despite important progress, glaring gaps in coverage and access remain, particularly among NYC immigrant communities. Many qualified immigrants are confused about coverage opportunities through the New York State of Health (NYSOH) or have not enrolled due to misinformation about the immigration consequences. Undocumented immigrants who are explicitly barred from purchasing health insurance through the NYSOH are apprehensive to take advantage of public health benefits offered by NYC for fear of deportation or for lack of sufficient information about their basic rights to avail of the care.

Furthermore, as citywide efforts to provide health coverage for all began its implementation phase, other areas of concern, such as the wellness and health of our children, require attention. Given the high rates of childhood obesity and asthma in NYC, it is imperative that NYC ensure the expansion of equal access to quality physical education in citywide DOE schools, particularly in low-income communities of color. And, for families in emergencies, it is critical that NYC ensure that emergency food is available through the Emergency Food Assistance Program.

The recent report from the Comptroller's office shows that there is still significant work to be done to providing coverage to all NYC residents. Ten neighborhoods in particular have demonstrated high rates of uninsured where a majority of residents are immigrants.

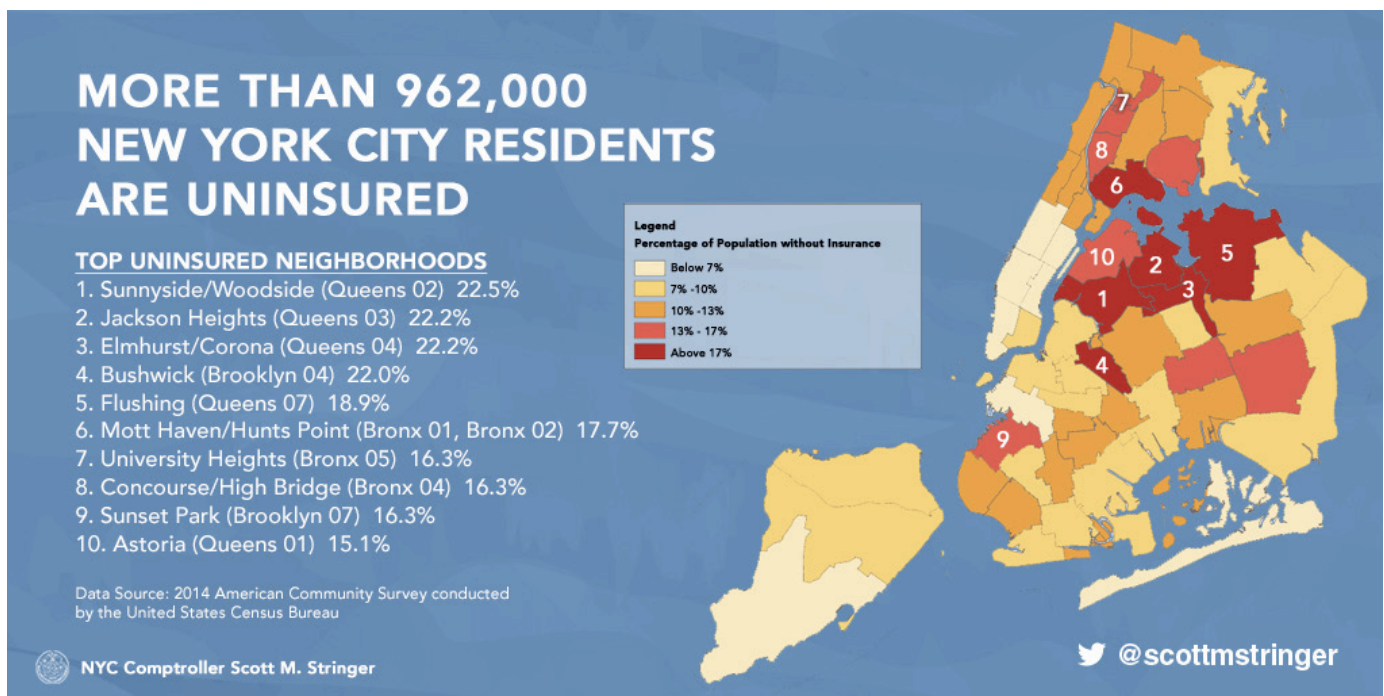
Closing some of these gaps requires significant targeted, culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach and education efforts, especially among vulnerable communities, as

Table 4: The Uninsured Population in New York City, 2009-2014

Year	Total Population	Total Uninsured	Percent Uninsured
2014	8,428,414	962,805	11.4%
2013	8,342,235	1,121,972	13.4%
2012	8,273,096	1,139,500	13.8%
2011	8,180,575	1,198,656	14.6%
2010	8,113,847	1,198,656	14.8%
2009	8,320,856	1,170,370	14.1%

Data Source: 2014 American Community Survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau

Figure 2: The Top 10 Uninsured Neighborhoods in NYC



well as a new approach that includes undocumented immigrants and provides them with safe, quality, and affordable health care. The limited Navigator funding from the state is specifically targeted for enrollment and cannot adequately support all the education, outreach, and post-enrollment activities needed in a diverse and vibrant city like NYC.

A critical tool for addressing these problems is to invest \$5 million in Access Health NYC, which would allow more than 50 community-based organizations (CBOs) to propel forward efforts to educate immigrants about health care options and enroll them for coverage, wherever possible. CBOs are trusted, culturally competent messengers to whom immigrants and other hard-to-reach, underserved populations look for information about public health programs and benefits, health care rights, how to secure insurance and low-cost care, and how to use their newly acquired coverage. Supporting this network of CBOs will help ensure that thousands of NYC's immigrants can learn about their health care coverage options and enroll in the most appropriate option and successfully use their coverage once enrolled.

In its first year of funding, Access Health NYC has distributed \$1 million in funding to community based organizations to provide education, outreach, and assistance to all New Yorkers about how to access health care and coverage. The impact of Access Health NYC has already been felt in the ordinary lives of NYC residents. Take for example the story of an immigrant Arab family from Brooklyn (who prefer to remain anonymous for this report). The father came to one of the community based organizations (CBO) in Access Health NYC after receiving an Arabic-language flyer to apply for the family health insurance coverage. During that time the son was accompanying his father, but he looked very sick and the father had no idea what was wrong with his child. The Access Health NYC outreach person contacted an Arabic speaking doctor to examine the child on that same day. The doctor performed a blood test on the child and found out that the child was diabetic and that his blood sugar level was 625—an astronomical level. The doctor immediately provided the child with adequate treatment. Because of the language barrier, the family had no idea the boy was diabetic until they reached out to the CBO, who may well have saved the child's life.

Secondly, **NYC must invest in ongoing support to Action Health NYC**, a new initiative first announced as "Direct Access" by Mayor Bill De Blasio as part of a comprehensive plan to improve healthcare access for NYC's immigrant population. ActionHealth NYC offers low- or no-cost coordinated health care to enrollees who are immigrant New Yorkers and currently do not have access or qualify for health insurance, contingent upon income-eligibility. The program features a primary care home model, in which patients have an opportunity to build a relationship with health professionals who understand their individual medical history and health care needs, as well as additional care support mechanisms for individuals with high-risk chronic conditions. Outreach for this project is conducted by several community based organizations that are trusted resources for NYC's immigrant communities. In the initial year, ActionHealth NYC will only accept a limited number of people. Additional funding should be allocated to this project to expand the enrollment to reach more individuals, and to provide further funding to CBOs to support the outreach and enrollment into the program.

Similarly, **NYC must continue to allocate \$1.5 million in funding to the Immigrant Health Initiative, in order to support key projects that help immigrants access health care services.**

NYC must also provide at least \$50 million over three years to ensure that every elementary school is compliant with the State physical education minimum requirements. The new PE Works program should be expanded to all 32 districts (it is currently active in eight school districts). Specifically, this expanded funding would allow for the hire of a proportional number of physical education managers and instructors to engage in school

needs assessments and provide support to physical education teachers, as well as the hire of 500 new certified physical education teachers. Given that the FY16 budget funded a system-wide analysis of physical education barriers and needs, NYC should include capital funding in the FY17 budget to begin to address the capital needs identified to provide appropriate physical education spaces.

In addition, **NYC must increase funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) to \$22 Million in the FY2017 budget, to support soup kitchens, food pantries and other emergency food providers.** EFAP is a critical tool for ensuring that the most vulnerable New Yorkers are able to access food every day.

Finally, **NYC must invest to keep its public hospital system functioning for our communities and providing critically needed health services to NYC's neediest communities.** Immigrant communities appreciate the Mayor's commitment to our public hospital system functioning for our communities and are eager to work with NYC to keep the system working well.

7. Civic Engagement

- Invest \$1 million to engage, educate, and mobilize 75,000 immigrant residents to register to vote;
- Increase funding for Student Voter Registration Day (SVRD) to \$1 million;
- Expand funding for Participatory Budgeting (PB) to \$1.12 million to meaningfully integrate immigrant communities into the process; and
- Revamp the Board of Elections through a \$20 million reforms package.

NYC houses over 40% of all voters in the state—a quarter of whom are immigrants. But with the continued lack of language accessibility, understanding of the electoral process, and problems at the polls, NYC’s new Americans continue to be civically disengaged and, in turn, unable to fully integrate into the fabric of NYC. While NYC has been a leader in engaging its residents civically, it must do more to engage the newest NYC residents and ensure the creation and expansion of programs to holistically integrate all residents civically.

Almost every election year in recent history has had dwindling voter turnout rates; the decision of selecting representation is left in the hands of a few rather than the many. When New American voters do head to the polls, they are inhibited by poorly-trained poll workers, difficulty navigating the voting process, and language barriers. Engaging immigrant NYC residents in the electoral process offers a unique opportunity to fundamentally change the dynamics of civic engagement in NYC. Important electoral reforms that expand voting access are critical.

First, **NYC must invest \$1 million to engage, educate, and mobilize 75,000 immigrant residents to register to vote.** With 2016 a critical presidential and state election year, and 2017 hosting local city elections, ensuring that all citizens are exercising their right to vote is vital. Such resources are critical for organizations like the Minkwon Center for Community Action. With only 42% of eligible Asian Americans registered to vote, MinKwon has been at the forefront of improving Asian American voter registration and engagement -

since 2004, they have registered over 72,000 voters. MinKwon goes directly to the community, reaching out to individuals in locations such as local senior centers or supermarkets. Those they engage are often unaware of voter information due to lack of language access or knowledge of the electoral system. If NYC is to truly improve civic engagement and enfranchise New Americans, it must invest in the many organizations like MinKwon and support voter registration outreach.

Second, **NYC must increase funding for Student Voter Registration Day (SVRD) to \$1 million.** SVRD registers high school seniors in all City Council



Pictured: Minkwon Center for Community Action registers voters in Queens.

districts to vote, pledges them to be civically engaged, and offers resources on immigration and college support. The curriculum is inclusive, offering options for both citizen and non-citizen students. This funding will support the expansion of the successful program by allowing multiple days of voter registration and civic engagement activities and adding more high schools to it.

SVRD is important to civically-minded youth and their community organizations. As Jocelyn, a member of Atlas: DIY in Brooklyn noted: “I want other young people to know that they can voice their political opinions and that they matter to this country. By helping to facilitate SVRD at James Madison High School, I saw this spark come to life in my peers. We are the generation that will be affected by the decisions of these politicians. Being able to see youth come together to learn made me feel empowered—that our future will shaped by us!”



Pictured: Atlas DIY participated in registering voters on Student Voter Registration Day.

Third, **NYC must expand funding for Participatory Budgeting (PB) to \$1.12 million to meaningfully integrate immigrant communities into the process.** This investment will allow each of the 28 participating district \$40,000 to effectively engage communities that have traditionally been excluded from local decision-making due to their lack of English proficiency or immigration status, or who are culturally unfamiliar with civic processes.

Fourth, **NYC must include at least \$20 million to revamp the Board of Elections through a reform package** to be agreed to by the Board of Elections that, among other reforms, increases language access, improves programming and procedures, and updates the training program for election site workers, particularly to include a cultural competency curriculum. Resources should additionally be added to provide community-based oversight and analysis of poll sites to monitor service provision.

8. LGBTQ Justice

- Invest \$1 million to fund specialized, culturally-competent LGBTQ immigration services provided by community-based organizations;
- Baseline \$1 million to support the creation and maintenance of Gender Sexuality Alliances in NYC public schools; and
- Invest \$1 million for hate violence response and prevention for the LGBTQ community to be allocated to community-based organizations and awareness efforts.

LGBTQ people of color experience extremely high rates of poverty, violence and discrimination. Many young and adult LGBTQ immigrants flee persecution and hate in their home countries only to face similar aggressions here in New York. They experience hate and discrimination in schools, the workplace and in accessing housing and other critical services, as well as in just walking from their homes to local stores.

In the education system, they are often bullied and lack support networks, including safe spaces to learn about gender and sexuality. Teachers, counselors and staff often lack training and professional development specific to the needs of LGBTQ students, and how to provide support (e.g., in response to bullying) with appropriate language and sensitivity.

Many LGBTQ immigrants also face extreme discrimination in the workplace when applying for jobs or from peers. Those applying for housing are frequently rejected simply because of their sexuality. These blatant acts of discrimination exacerbate rates of poverty and economic disparities for LGBTQ immigrants.

Finally, persistent acts of hate violence in public and private spaces against LGBTQ people of color inject a culture of fear into our rich immigrant communities. While NYC has made efforts to combat gender and sexuality discrimination through the Executive Order to protect individuals' rights to use public restrooms that align with their gender identity and a Municipal Identification card (IDNYC) that allows individuals to declare their gender identity, NYC has much work to do to protect the lives of LGBTQ people of color.

Following a series of violent attacks on LGBTQ people of color in Jackson Heights, Queens, MRNY member Vlad Briones said, "As an LGBTQ resident of Jackson Heights, this attack makes me feel sad, scared, and unsafe. Jackson Heights is a diverse community with people from all over the world, and we as the LGBTQ community demand respect. This type of hate violence highlights all the work we still have to do to make sure that Jackson Heights and other communities accept LGBTQ residents."

NYC can further advance justice and equity for LGBTQ immigrants through several targeted initiatives.

First, **NYC must invest \$1 million to fund specialized, culturally-competent LGBTQ immigration services** provided by community-based organizations. LGBTQ immigrants face particularly complex cases that require specialized support. NYC should respond to this need.

Second, **NYC must baseline \$1 million to support the creation and maintenance of Gender Sexuality Alliances** in NYC public schools. GSAs are critical for offering the needed support, and improving school climate for, LGBTQ youth. As Isaiah Quiñones, a Make the Road New York member, notes: "GSAs are important because they provide a safe space

for LGTBQI+ identified folks and their allies and can be a resource to help educate people within the school environment.” They should be expanded throughout NYC.

Third, **NYC must invest \$1 million for hate violence response and prevention for the LGBTQ community to be allocated to community-based organizations and awareness efforts.** This work would entail making sure communities are safe by offering safe spaces in community organizations and conducting outreach before incidents occur, and, when they do, to quickly respond.

Pictured: Isaiah Quiñones, a Make the Road New York member who attends high school in Bushwick, believes strongly in the importance of Gender Sexuality Alliances to support LBGTQ youth.



9. Newcomer Communities Capacity-Building

- Increase the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to \$5 million to help build the capacity of community organizations that serve NYC’s Black, Latino, Asian, and immigrant communities;
- Amend NYC’s contracting policies to provide opportunities for smaller, immigrant-led nonprofit organizations serving communities of color to enable them to compete with large nonprofit groups;
- Strengthen and expand language access under Executive Order 120 to ensure the provision of translation and interpretation services at City agencies and expand the scope beyond the top six languages to encompass growing immigrant communities throughout NYC; and
- Increase programmatic support for public libraries throughout NYC.

As NYC’s immigrant communities and diversity have grown, the resources to support the institutions that serve these communities have not kept pace with the population. Despite there being hundreds of nonprofit organizations that provide vital services to newcomers in NYC, these nonprofits are often overlooked and underfunded. Without stronger mechanisms to support these immigrant-serving nonprofit organizations and institutions, and without greater efforts to make NYC as accessible to immigrants as possible, NYC cannot make all the progress needed on the recommendations set forth in this report and towards the shared goal of transforming the future of immigrant communities. To move forward in being as inclusive as possible to immigrant communities, we recommend the following.

First, **the Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (NSF) must be increased to \$5 million to help secure the long-term viability of community-based human service organizations that serve clients in diverse and low-income communities.** The first collaborative project of its kind in the country, the NSF is currently wrapping up Year Two of distributing \$2.5 million to nonprofits that serve NYC’s diverse communities. During this time of severe budget cutbacks and drastically diminishing social safety nets, these nonprofits provide critical services to diverse communities in the areas of health, socialization, and culture. Almost always grown “organically” within neighborhood settings, they are frequently the social glue that brings and keeps communities together by offering information and services with cultural and linguistic expertise. These nonprofits are often the gatekeepers to immigrant communities as well as the community “firehouses” during times of crisis. As NYC’s immigrant communities grow, these nonprofits are increasingly called upon to lend their expertise and offset the limited capabilities of city agencies. To that end, we must continue to build and support the infrastructure of the immigrant-serving nonprofit community.

Second, **NYC must recognize the unique value of these smaller groups and amend its contracting policies to allow smaller groups to compete for NYC funding.** Many of the nonprofits that serve immigrants tend to be smaller, a fact that makes it nearly impossible for them to compete with larger nonprofits for funding opportunities. Despite the fact that

these groups often offer services with cultural expertise and language proficiency beyond that of organizations double or triple their size, they are overwhelmed during NYC's contracting process and often get wedged out as a result. Based on FPWA's Recommendations to Support Small Community-Based Organizations,¹⁷ this report highlights the following key recommendations:

- Revise the Request for Proposal (RFP) process to promote opportunities for small organizations that serve communities of color and immigrant communities; award extra points in the RFP evaluation process to organizations that demonstrate their capacity to provide culturally competent and language accessible services.
- Reduce the number of RFPs seeking citywide or borough-wide providers and instead identify specific populations and neighborhoods to be served. Because many populations are not concentrated in one area and therefore do not qualify for geographic-based contracts, NYC should also look for services targeted at "communities of shared interest" with similar cultural, linguistic, and/or socioeconomic characteristics. In addition, RFPs should not assume that the cost per person is the same for all populations and instead rely on Census tract data as opposed to zip code data, which often obscure needs due to gentrification.
- Facilitate and incentivize subcontracting between larger contracted organizations and smaller organizations with the capacity to work with targeted communities.
- Conduct outreach to community-based organizations throughout each borough when concept papers and RFPs are released. Small organizations can respond to RFPs only if they know when funding opportunities become available, so NYC must improve its outreach to ensure that as many qualified organizations as possible are aware of RFPs.

Third, **NYC should devote resources to strengthen and expand language access under Executive Order 120 to ensure translation and interpretation services at City agencies beyond the top six languages to encompass growing immigrant communities throughout NYC.** Under NYC's Executive Order 120, NYC agencies that interact with the public are required to provide in-language services to residents who have limited English proficiency. These languages are determined by the top six languages spoken in NYC. The language needs of some key ethnic hubs, however, are never met because the number of people who speak those languages does not meet the threshold for services under EO 120. NYC should allocate sufficient resources to maintain the language access mandate for the six overall most frequently-spoken languages, as well as increase the capacity to serve a broader range of languages to reflect NYC's growing diversity.

Fourth, **public libraries are an important source of information and education for immigrants, and NYC must continue to support these critical institutions.** Libraries help immigrants learn English, provide free computer access – which is especially valuable to individuals and families who cannot afford a computer and an internet connection at home – host workshops to update job skills, and offer citizenship classes. In fact, NYC's public libraries often serve as one of the most important hubs in a community; many of the busiest libraries are in immigrant neighborhoods. In recent years, NYC has made investments to keep the doors open longer. NYC must continue this support and recognition of the crucial role libraries play in the lives of immigrants.

Endnotes

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- ¹¹ "On the Corner: Day Labor in the United States." Valenzuela, A., Theodore, N., Melendez, E., & Gonzalez, A. L. (2006). Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Urban Poverty.
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ "Disparity Report." April 2016. Young Men's Initiative. Available online: http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/yymi/downloads/pdf/Disparity_Report.pdf
- ¹⁴ Most of the data in this table are reproduced from "Protecting Immigrant Homes: The Importance of Stronger Rent Laws for the Newest New Yorkers." Make the Road New York. May 2015. Available here: <http://www.maketheroad.org/report.php?ID=4036>. The final data point comes from analysis of 2014 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey by Tom Waters of the Community Service Society, for which we are very appreciative.
- ¹⁵ Data from the New York City Department of Education (DOE), 2014 and 2015.
- ¹⁶ "Health Insurance Coverage and the Affordable Care Act." March 3, 2016. Uberoi, N, Finegold, K, Gee, E. Aspe Issue Brief, 2010–2016.
- ¹⁷ Developed by the Asian American Federation, Black Agency Executives, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Hispanic Federation, New York Immigration Coalition, and New York Urban League, Recommendations to Support Small Organizations, December 2015.