

The Demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages Programs
Among Immigrant Adults in New York City

Testimony of

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The New York City Council Committee on Immigration

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Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Anthony Tassi. I am the director of the Mayor's Office of Adult Education. Thank you for inviting me to testify before this Committee on the need for English language classes, a topic of considerable importance to the Administration and an issue that will have a significant impact on the future wellbeing of our City.

I applaud your leadership, Mr. Chairman, in taking on this issue. I think that there is no better time than now for us to be having this conversation. We are at a truly unique moment in our City's history when the stars are aligning on this issue. I come before you this morning very optimistic. I see many reasons to be hopeful. We have before us a number of good opportunities to do something very significant for immigrant communities throughout the City.

Background on Adult Education in New York City

Before I address these opportunities, let me offer just a few words of background on adult education in New York.

The Mayor established the Office of Adult Education in October 2006 to strengthen the adult education system and improve outcomes for immigrant and low-income families. He charged my office with coordinating policy across City agencies, promoting innovation and best practices among programs, and connecting participating agencies to the Administration's priorities. The Office is responsible for working with a range of City, State, and Federal agencies to advance adult education in New York City.

When we speak about the adult education system, we are talking about publicly funded free classes offered by the:

- Department of Education
- City University of New York
- Public Libraries
- Human Resources Administration, and
- numerous community based organizations either under contract to the Department of Youth and Community Development, the State Education Department, or the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

I should note that several other agencies play an important, albeit more modest, role in providing adult education classes to eligible individuals. These agencies include the:

- Department of Small Business Services
- New York City Housing Authority
- Department of Parks and Recreation, and
- State University of New York.

Across these agencies, there are two main types of instruction:

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), ranging from ESL Literacy classes for immigrants with very limited native language literacy skills to advanced classes for immigrants who have higher education and just need to perfect their English for work or further study; and

Adult Basic Education (ABE), ranging from literacy (i.e., help with reading and writing) to GED preparation; these classes are for adults who already speak English.¹

Many Immigrants Need ABE Classes in Addition to ESOL

While I know that the focus of this hearing is on the demand for ESOL programs, I would like to bring the Committee's attention to the adult basic education classes. Traditionally, many people have thought of ESOL as being for immigrants and ABE for high school dropouts who decided to go back to school later in life. However, the reality is that the ABE programs serve a large and growing number of immigrants as well.

In thinking about educational programs for immigrants, we need to remember the important role of basic literacy as a precondition for English language acquisition and that the GED is a critically important credential for immigrant New Yorkers – one that we hope will be a stepping stone, rather than a terminal degree. Given the growing numbers of immigrants in New York with both limited English proficiency and little formal education in their native country, ABE classes should be of concern to this Committee in its interest in improving education for immigrants.

Strengths of the Current Adult Education System

Let me turn now to a brief discussion of the strengths of the current system. Understanding and building off these strengths is key to our collective ability to meet more of the surging demand for ESOL classes.

1. The Students

The first and most obvious strength of our system is our student population. There are approximately 62,000 individuals in adult education classes in New York City. Roughly 41,000 of them are enrolled in ESOL classes. As I mentioned earlier, many of the remaining 21,000 students in ABE classes are immigrants as well and have already gained a basic fluency in English.

¹ The system also includes career and technical education (CTE) classes to prepare adults for certification and licensure in designated professions (such as licensed practical nursing) and basic education in the native language (BENL), but these are relatively small parts of the system.

Mayor Bloomberg recognized and honored the intelligence and talents of the students when he said:

New Yorkers who sign up for adult education classes come from all walks of life and from every corner of the world. They bring with them a wealth of experience and a thirst for a better life for themselves and their families. They are poets, mathematicians, community leaders, and aspiring entrepreneurs.

It has been a great honor for me to have the opportunity to get to know many of these students. They are an inspiration to me and the best bosses you could hope to have in public service.

2. The Teachers

Another incredibly important strength of our system lies in the teachers who have chosen to make careers in adult education. For many new immigrants struggling to learn English and make their way in a new country, their ESOL teacher is their lifeline. In addition to helping them master the language, teachers provide their students with guidance and advice, mentoring and coaching, and sometimes, when times get tough, even a shoulder to cry on. ESOL teachers are an incredibly important resource in the process of integrating new immigrants into mainstream society.

3. Innovation, Best Practices, and Quality of Services

Adult education teachers are supported by a number of outstanding program managers who oversee high quality instructional programs. The hallmark of these great managers is that they are never content with achieving good results – they work hard to continually improve their services and seek out best practices from the field to strengthen their operations.

4. Diversity of Educational Providers and Multiple Funding Sources

Another great strength of our system is the wide diversity of organizations that provide adult education services. They range from small grassroots community based organizations that just provide classroom space to host a teacher from the Department of Education to more resource-intensive programs located on CUNY College campuses. And we have everything in between these extremes. The participation of such a wide diversity of organizations gives adult education a tremendous vitality.

Programs are supported by funding from an array of federal, state and local sources. The Council's longstanding commitment to ESOL in the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative is noteworthy in this regard.

Need for ESOL Services

While the Committee should applaud the outstanding work of adult educators, and be proud of your important role in supporting them, it also must be noted that the system is simply too small

to meet the current needs for ESOL and ABE services among immigrants. Indeed, we have funding in place to serve only 62,000 adults (41,000 of them in ESOL), an unacceptably small fraction of the total population in need.²

1. Increasing Numbers of New Yorkers with Limited English Proficiency

This Committee is well aware of the tremendous success New York enjoys in attracting new immigrants. You are also aware, no doubt, of the steady increase we have seen in the number of New Yorkers with limited English proficiency ("LEP"). According to the 2000 Census, there are 1.5 million LEP adults 21 and over in New York City. I think that it is safe to assume that today in 2007, the current number of LEP adults in New York City is well in excess of the 1.5 million estimated in Census 2000. To give you a perspective, from 1990 to 2000, the number of LEP adults in New York City increased by more than 400,000.

2. Growth in the LEP Population with Lower Levels of Educational Attainment

It is also important to mention the changing characteristics of the LEP population in New York City. Perhaps the most noteworthy development is the rapid growth of individuals who speak only the most basic, rudimentary English and who have very low levels of educational attainment in their native country.

From 1990 to 2000 the number of adults in New York who told the Census that they speak English "not at all" or "not well" and that they do not have a high school education increased by more than 100,000 to reach 488,000. That is a 26 percent increase in just ten years.

Now, if we factor in the likely growth from the 2000 Census to today, we are talking about a population that is one and a half times bigger than the entire population of the city of Miami. That is a staggering number of adults living in New York City who speak almost no English at all and have limited functional literacy skills below the high school level. And it is all the more alarming when you consider that the poverty rate among these adults is approximately 31 percent, compared to 18 percent for all adults in New York City.

Meeting the Growing Need for ESOL and ABE Classes

In the face of such significant challenges, I see tremendous cause for hope and optimism. Working together, we can make a significant difference in these conditions. The time has never been better for systematic improvements.

Now let me take a few minutes to outline what the Administration is doing to address the urgent need for adult education services. As you'll hear, part of our strategy is to shore up, support, and

² In addition to these 62,000 adults served, there are others attending free classes in publicly funded programs that do not report their enrollment data to the same State data collection system. Understanding and better coordinating with these programs is a goal for the Administration's planning efforts.

strengthen the current system and part of our strategy is to drive new resources into the field to expand the number of people served.

1. Establishment of the Mayor's Office of Adult Education

The first thing that I would like to mention is the Bloomberg Administration's recognition of the central role that language and literacy skills play in many of the Mayor's most important social policy priorities, such as reducing poverty, improving health, and increasing educational achievement. With this awareness, and on the advice of Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott, the Mayor designated me as the point person to oversee the ESOL and ABE systems and coordinate policy across agencies.

2. The Mayor's New Funding Commitment of \$10m Annually

And the good news is that the policy commitment and programmatic interest has been matched by an infusion of new resources into the field.

As this Committee knows, last year the Mayor committed and baselined \$5 million in federal Community Development Block Grant funding to strengthen the adult education system. These funds were allocated to four purposes:

- to stabilize designated CBOs that lost State funding in the most recent procurement cycle;
- to seed innovative pilot projects that integrate preparation for health care job training programs into ABE and ESOL classes;
- to strengthen and expand a program of instruction for ex-offenders; and
- to create a new television show that will help hundreds of thousands of immigrants improve their English skills.

In this year's Executive Budget, the Mayor has allocated an additional \$3.8m in City tax levy for FY 08 and \$5.3m for FY 09. These funding amounts include resources to carry out a comprehensive strategic plan to coordinate and expand the City's adult education system.

I think that it is worth noting that these commitments – in excess of \$10m in new funding for the system by FY 09 – represent a very significant expansion of the amounts historically allocated to the system by City Hall.

3. Coordination of Funding Sources and Programs for Longer Term Expansion

These new funds provided by the Mayor will expand our commitment to adult literacy pursuant to a strategic plan that we will begin to develop this summer. Representatives of all the stakeholders of the system – students, teachers, public and private funders, employers, elected officials, etc. – will be consulted in this process to forge a broad consensus on the elements of a coordinated and expanded adult education system and to determine the resource requirements to achieve even higher levels of performance. As we develop this plan, it is my belief that additional investments can be pursued.

That is our vision for how we can meet more of the demand for ESOL classes: a comprehensive planning process that builds consensus on the future shape and scope of the adult education system and clearly articulates the case for additional investment. Because our challenge is so great, we need to think big and make decisions strategically. For each funding source and public program, we will work with our partners and other stakeholders to ask hard questions, such as:

- What are the goals for the program and are they consistent with what we know works to move immigrants out of poverty?
- Are the resources available to organizations to truly achieve the stated goals?
- What is the process by which adult education programs can access funding?
- Does the funding mechanism build capacity of organizations and give them the opportunity to plan for services over several years?
- How can better coordination leverage other funding sources and resources for programs to use?
- What are the mechanisms for accountability and continuous quality improvement to ensure that we are maximizing outcomes for immigrant families?
- How can we develop common outcomes to measure success and evaluate services?
- How can we ensure that programs are effectively coordinated across providers and funding streams?
- How are programs linked to next steps for students, including employment training and post-secondary education?

The active participation of this Committee in this planning process will be critically important to its success and I look forward to working closely with the Chairman and other members of this Committee as we move forward.

4. New Educational TV Show for Immigrants

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to draw the attention of this Committee to one other initiative the Administration is planning: the creation of a new television show to help immigrants improve their English skills. No matter how much we are able to expand the system of classroom instruction over the next few years, there undoubtedly will remain New Yorkers with limited English skills who cannot be accommodated in a program. Therefore, we need to think more creatively about alternative resources for these individuals to improve their English and gain access to information and resources to meet their needs. Television represents a tremendous untapped potential in this regard.

The basic idea is to create a TV show that immigrants can watch to improve their English and learn more about City services. Right now, if you don't speak English well, there is almost nothing on television that you can actually follow and from which you can learn useful English skills and important information about the City from the perspective of a new immigrant. An entertaining and engaging series is being created to fill this gap.

In this new television program, the characters will speak clearly, modeling effective communication skills in a variety of every-day situations – situations that have meaning in the lives of immigrants. For example, we will see how immigrant New Yorkers can get involved in

their child's education and overcome language barriers and knowledge gaps to work with the teacher and the school's parent coordinator. In another segment, the characters may be calling 311 to solve a problem or get some information. The show will be subtitled in English to aid in language acquisition and increase viewers' comprehension.

The show will be broadcast on Channel 25, the City's Emmy Award winning TV station, starting early next year.

In addition, workbooks and other instructional materials will be created to go along with the show so that viewers can practice their reading and writing at home or participate in a small viewing and discussion group hosted by a local community based organization. We will work with the ethnic and community press to disseminate these materials, which could be published in the newspapers in the form of a viewer's guide, and to promote the show more generally.

And one of the most innovative things about the show is that it will be based on the true stories of real New Yorkers. One great thing about the adult education system is that if you are looking for amazing stories of inspiration, drama, and humor, you need only look as far as your nearest ESOL classroom.

Working with the Committee Going Forward

I look forward to working closely with this Committee on the implementation of this television project. We need your help to make sure that immigrant New Yorkers in all five boroughs know about the show and tune in to watch it and that community based organizations have the opportunity to participate in the process.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the hopeful conditions we have before us and the terrific opportunities we have to make systemic improvements in the how we provide educational opportunity to immigrants. As Mayor Bloomberg said:

There has never been a better time than now to be involved in adult education in New York City. Whether you are a student, volunteer tutor, program administrator, teacher, or financial supporter, you are making a difference and helping to create a brighter future for our City.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Administration's perspective on these critical issues.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Immigration Oversight Hearing

**The Demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages Programs
Among Immigrant Adults in New York City**

May 4, 2007

Good morning. Thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Tara Colton and I am the associate research director of the Center for an Urban Future, a non-partisan policy institute that studies economic development, workforce development and other issues that are important to New York City's future.

I want to start by thanking Councilmember Stewart and the members of the Immigration Committee for holding this hearing, and for inviting me to testify. I also want to commend the Council for its continued support of English-language instruction for New York's immigrants through the landmark \$9.1 million Immigrant Opportunities Initiative.

Today's hearing shines a light on a critically important issue: are English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs for New York City's immigrants keeping pace with the growing demand? Unfortunately, across the city and state, the answer is a resounding no. Last fall, the Center for an Urban Future and the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy released a report titled "Lost in Translation," which found that immigrants have been fueling population growth throughout the state, from Brooklyn to Binghamton, but the state-run ESOL program hasn't come close to keeping pace with the demand. Our report shows that even though the state's foreign-born population has grown by nearly 1.3 million since 1990, adult ESOL programs administered through the State Department of Education added only 15,000 new seats over the same period.

This isn't a new problem, but it has gotten more serious in recent years, and New York City feels the pinch more profoundly than anywhere else in the state. There are nearly three million

foreign-born residents in the Big Apple and the numbers continue to climb. In 2005, Brooklyn was home to 728,000 foreign-born adults; 59% of Queens adults were born outside of the U.S.; and Staten Island, long the least diverse of the boroughs, gained nearly 20,000 immigrants since 2000.

Coupled with this growth in immigration is a steady uptick in the number of New York City residents with limited or no English proficiency. Our report found that citywide, there were 1.23 million adults who spoke English “less than very well” in 2005, but fewer than 42,000 were enrolled in state-funded ESOL programs that same year, or 3.4% of those who could benefit. In other words, for every seat available, there were 33 potential bodies to fill it.

To drill down a little deeper, I want to share 2005 ESOL enrollment figures for each of the boroughs. One caveat, though – enrollment figures are based on the location of the agency offering services, not the student’s county of residence. For instance, if a student lived in the Bronx but took a class in Brooklyn, they would be counted in the Brooklyn total. But enrollment figures do paint a good picture of how many students are being served in each borough, regardless of residence.

Brooklyn has the highest enrollment of any borough – approximately 20,000 people were enrolled in state-funded ESOL, but the borough was home to 343,000 working-age adults with limited English proficiency. In the Bronx, 2,600 people were enrolled, compared to 230,000 adults in need. Manhattan had 170,000 adults with limited English skills but served just 9,500 people. Queens had by far the largest number of adults who didn’t speak English well – about 450,000 – but classes in the borough enrolled just 8,600 students. Lastly, Staten Island, which has a growing immigrant population, had just 750 adults enrolled, compared to the 38,000 who could benefit. Again, I credit the Council for its work on the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative, but funding across the board is still astonishingly low – the state spent \$74 million on adult ESOL last year, which served just 5% of adult New Yorkers with limited English proficiency.

Unless action is taken, the huge gap between demand for ESOL and the services available will have serious economic and workforce development consequences. Today's immigrants must compete in a knowledge economy, and from manufacturing to home health care, there aren't many jobs available beyond the entry level if you don't have at least some English proficiency. Language barriers also hurt businesses: they reduce productivity and cause high turnover. Many businesses told us that ESOL is one of the most important workforce development issues they're facing.

While our report focused primarily on the changes that need to take place at the state and federal level, the city does have a major role to play in boosting the availability of ESOL for immigrant New Yorkers. There are several things the city could do.

First, funding for ESOL must be increased across the board. As much as the city has already done, the rising number of immigrants suggests that a larger investment in ESOL is an investment in our future. Expanding city funding for the IOI and other adult literacy initiatives would be an important start. The current level of funding, around \$9 million, is just a drop in a very large bucket and a sizable chunk of it doesn't even go to ESOL programs.

Secondly, city officials should press for additional state and federal funding for ESOL to help shrink the enormous gap between supply and demand. There are two state programs in need of major reforms – and the City Council and the Mayor could serve as powerful advocates for change.

The state's Adult Literacy Education (ALE) program funds ESOL, but its budget doesn't reflect the fact that more than 1.5 million new immigrants have entered the state since it was created 19 years ago. The Employment Preparation Education (EPE) program, which is the largest pot of state funds for ESOL, is rife with problems. EPE funds, which are allocated by the legislature, cannot be used by libraries or community-based organizations to offer English language instruction. And an outdated funding formula shortchanges cities that need funds the most, including New York City, which receives substantially less for each instructional hour compared to large cities upstate.

Even with additional government funds, the system will still be severely under-funded relative to the need. The city's economic development agencies, especially the Department of Small Business Services, are our portal into the business community, and it's important for them to take action around these issues. They are increasing their focus on ESOL, but there is more that can be done. In partnership with local business groups, they should urge employers to provide funding and release time for their workers in need of English instruction. Employers could also guarantee wage gains for workers who participate in ESOL programs. The city and local intermediaries can also bring together small businesses that can't afford to provide these services on their own.

There are huge payoffs to English language acquisition – for workers, businesses and the city as a whole. The American dream has a higher barrier of entry for today's immigrants than their predecessors – but it's not unattainable. But if we don't increase investment in ESOL, it could have major consequences, and it's a risk the city can't afford to take.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.



Literacy Assistance Center

The Need for English for Speakers of Other Languages

I recently heard Deputy Mayor Doctoroff present the city's plan to rebuild and improve our city's infrastructure. It was a complex plan filled with talk of roads, aquifers and trains, planes and busses. Then Joe Salvo, director of the Population Division of the Department of City Planning painted a picture of who will be drinking that water and riding those trains. He explained that in the next decade alone, the number of non-Hispanic whites will decline by 750,000. They will be replaced by an equal number of immigrants of color, most of who will come from countries with high rates of poverty and low education levels.

The 1990 census reported that 28 percent of the city's residents were foreign-born; just 10 years later, the proportion was 36 percent—2.9 million New Yorkers. Nearly half of them—46 percent—spoke a language other than English at home. That's more than 1.4 million people. They came, and continue to come, from Albania and China, the Dominican Republic and Zambia, speaking more than 160 languages from all over the world. In just 30 years, a city that was primarily of European descent has become a multi-continental melting pot, with no dominant race/ethnic or nationality group. What no one talked about during that presentation is the need for a social service infrastructure that will teach these immigrants English, so that they can work, acquire citizenship, navigate the health care system and support their children's education.

We've got about 1.4 million adults in this city who desperately need English classes, and right now we provide only 41,000 seats for them. We choose not to serve 97 percent of those in need.

Want a clearer picture?

53 percent of all babies born in NYC are to foreign born mothers. 43 percent of the total number of immigrants in NY this morning arrived within the last 10 years. The largest foreign-born groups in the year 2000 were Dominicans, Chinese and Jamaicans. Queens, was home to the largest number and proportion of immigrants, more than one million. Brooklyn was second. Together, these two boroughs accounted for more than two-thirds of the city's total immigrant population.

The Newest New Yorkers also notes that

- The number of immigrants arriving rose to more than 100,000 a year between 1990-2000, up from 86,000 annually in the 1980s.
- The growth in the city's population in the 1990's, from 7.3 million to more than 8 million, was entirely due to the dramatic increase in its foreign-born residents, which more than compensated for a continuing net outflow of native-born New Yorkers.
- The city's demographic future will be shaped by today's immigration patterns. Already, immigrants and their US-born offspring make up approximately 55 percent of the city's population.

- Although immigrants live in neighborhoods throughout the city, many of them find homes in neighborhoods that already have large foreign-born populations. In the year 2000, Washington Heights, Flushing, Astoria, Bay Ridge-Bensonhurst, and Elmhurst each had more immigrants than the entire borough of Staten Island.
- New Yorkers under 18 years of age are increasingly Hispanic (34 percent), Black non-Hispanic (29 percent) and Asian (10 percent). The proportion of White non-Hispanics has dropped to less than one-quarter in this age group.
- More immigrants arrived as immediate relatives of US citizens, on diversity visas and as refugees. The percentage of immigrants seeking entry on employment preference visas also increased. Many of these newcomers arrived with high-level skills.
- Immigrant households occupied nearly half of recently built housing between 1990 and 2002. They have played a vital role in stabilizing and strengthening the housing stock in once declining neighborhoods. Moreover, the growth in immigration has coincided with a huge increase in permits for new housing. The number of permits quadrupled in a single decade.
- Immigrants tend to be disproportionately of working age. In 2000, 79 percent of the foreign-born were between the ages of 18 and 64, compared to just 56% of the native-born population. In the core working ages – 25 to 54 years – between 40 and 50 percent of all city residents in the labor force were immigrants.
- Immigrants made up 43 percent of the city's labor force in 2000, a far greater proportion than their 36 percent representation in the total population. Immigrants are over-represented in manufacturing, construction, and in many service industries such as food, health, and social services, as well in wholesale and retail trade.

As Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Commissioner Guillermo Linares has noted, immigrants are the workers, business owners and community builders who take our city to new heights. It would be no exaggeration to say that the future prosperity of New York depends upon our ability to assimilate immigrants and give them the knowledge and skills they need to reach their full potential as citizens, parents, and workers. This task is urgent. It is vital. It is achievable. The single most effective, least expensive, and fastest way to accomplish it is to give our new neighbors an opportunity to learn English.

There are currently 41,000 ESOL seats for English Language learners in the city. We can do better.

Elyse Barbell Rudolph
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Testimony presented by Anthony Ng
Senior Legislative Advocate, United Neighborhood Houses

Before the Immigration Committee of the New York City Council
Kendall Stewart, Chair

Oversight Hearing – “The Demand for ESOL Programs Among Immigrant Adults in NYC.”

May 4, 2007

Good morning. My name is Anthony Ng, and I am the Senior Legislative Advocate at United Neighborhood Houses of New York, Inc. (UNH). UNH, founded in 1919, is the nonprofit membership organization for 35 settlement houses and community centers in New York City. Our member agencies comprise one of the largest human service systems in New York City and the largest group of settlements in the nation. 8,000 employees operate programs and activities in over 300 locations, reaching 500,000 New Yorkers each year. Services provided by our settlement houses include: early childhood education, after-school programs, teen centers, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, immigration legal services, GED classes, job training, tutoring, recreation, meals and supportive services for the elderly, mental health counseling, drug prevention, and art, music and drama programs.

Both immigrants and non-immigrants alike utilize the human services delivered by UNH members. To reach immigrants with these services, they are delivered in a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner. UNH member agencies have their central office in, or have program sites located in some of the City's major immigrant communities such as Jackson Heights, Sunset Park, Flatbush, East Harlem, Tremont, Flushing, Coney Island, and Chinatown, which collectively, have high Latino, Caribbean, West African, East Asian, South Asian, and Russian populations. UNH's current work in immigrant communities builds on its rich history of serving immigrants since the turn of the last century. Many of our member agencies in the Lower East Side served the first waves of Eastern European newcomers, and helped them to flourish socially, economically and culturally in this City.

Indeed, a key strategy that limited English proficient immigrants utilize to better integrate into life in New York City and the U.S. is to improve their English skills, thereby making the importance of ESOL programs very clear. When immigrant New Yorkers speak better English they can obtain jobs with better pay, better benefits, and a career ladder; increase participation in our democracy by being equipped to contribute to civic and community life. ESOL classes also help recent immigrants live more independent and confident lives. For example, one may feel more comfortable traveling around the City on public transportation; interacting more closely with their children's teachers; running errands within one's neighborhood.

ESOL programs also assist the City's workforce development and economic development efforts¹. Immigrant New Yorkers with good literacy skills can better communicate with employers, co-workers, and customers. They are more employable, and provide a labor pool to fill jobs in the growing sectors of the City's economy – retail, customer service, healthcare, construction, and small business. In addition, immigrants that attend ESOL classes at multi-service community based organizations (CBOs), like UNH members, may also utilize childcare, citizenship programs, immigration legal services, afterschool programs, and senior programs. It's also possible that immigrants may come for other human services first, and then learn that they can also take an ESOL class. Either way, ESOL classes are often leveraged with other human services to meet the needs of the student, and help further their socioeconomic opportunities.

Currently, nearly 2/3 of UNH members offer ESOL and or other adult literacy classes that help immigrants become more literate in English. Several of our members also help immigrants become more literate in their native language first, which speeds their ability to improve their English as well. UNH members report that demand for ESOL classes remains high, and has been high for many years now. One UNH member in Queens serves about 2,700 people annually, at five different English proficiency levels, yet they are forced to turn away almost 1,000 people each year due to inadequate funding for additional ESOL classes. It is also common to hear about ESOL programs:

- Holding lotteries to accept students.
- Discontinue using waiting lists because the number of students that desire a class is so great.
- Refrain from doing outreach when a new cycle of classes begins. Programs don't want to be overwhelmed with students who can't get into classes that quickly fill up.

A review of 2000 and 2005 U.S. Census data explains why UNH members and other ESOL providers in NYC face such high demand for their programs – about a quarter of New York City's adults – about 1.23 million – have inadequate English skills². However the resources to fund ESOL classes have not kept pace with demand and meet less than 5 percent of the need. Only 62,467 students are enrolled in government funded literacy programs, with about two-thirds in ESOL programs and the remaining 1/3 in adult basic education, and GED programs.³

In order to meet the high demand for ESOL classes in New York City, we need a greater investment in ESOL and adult literacy programs. The two current funding streams within the City budget that support ESOL programs at CBOs are the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) and the NYC Adult Literacy Initiative (NYCALI).

¹ In November 2006, The Center for an Urban Future and Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy released a report entitled "Lost in Translation," that details the important relationship between improved English skills amongst immigrants and a more prepared workforce for New York State in the decades to come.

² Center for an Urban Future and Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy. "Lost in Translation," p.4. Inadequate English skills are defined as adults ages 18-64 that speak English less than very well.

³ Literacy Assistance Center. This includes funding administered by the NYS Dept. of Education (SED) – WIA Title II, EPE, WEP, and ALE. **In 2006, SED administered over \$54 million of this funding to NYC.** Enrollment figures for ESOL and adult basic education programs supported by City tax levy dollars and the Community Services Block Grant are not included.

Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI)

We thank the City Council for your strong support on the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI) these past few years. IOI has been vital funding to allow community based organizations to offer ESOL classes and civics classes. The flexible nature of IOI funding also allows groups to serve those with the lowest English proficiency. We support the restoration of IOI at \$9.25 million in the FY2008 budget, and urge that groups are notified of their awards shortly after the City budget is adopted. For the past two years, groups were not notified of their awards until mid-November⁴. Once awards were made, groups would still have to wait months to actually draw down their funds, since they had to negotiate and sign contracts with DYCD, and then have them registered with the Comptroller's office. This time consuming process can be expedited with earlier decisions on who gets funded. We also understand that Chairman Stewart is interested in sponsoring a budget initiative to increase overall IOI funding. We would be supportive of this, but would urge that the minimum contract amounts are then increased to \$50,000. A higher per award amount helps to build the capacity of organizations to provide ESOL classes through IOI. In the long term, we urge the City Council to work with the Mayor to baseline IOI funding.

NYC Adult Literacy Initiative (NYCALI)

For nearly two decades, NYCALI has supported adult literacy programs in NYC. The Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD) has historically administered the portion of NYCALI that supports programs at CBOs. Last June, DYCD lost crucial funding for NYCALI when its joint application with CBOs for adult literacy funds from the NYS Education Department (SED) was denied. Thirty-six (36) CBO programs funded through NYCALI were at risk of reducing services or closing entirely by June 30. However, some of these programs had also applied for funding directly with SED, and were successful. Upon analyzing the funding situation the NYCALI providers were actually in, the City identified \$3.6 million to continue supporting 18 of the 36 providers. This was one year funding for FY2007, and DYCD committed to releasing a new RFP to ensure that services would continue once these contracts expired. Therefore, we were pleased to see the Mayor's Executive budget include \$3.8 million for adult literacy programs in FY2008, which increases to \$5.3 million in FY2009. These funds will be added to current funding to support a \$7.4 million RFP for adult literacy programs. We understand that DYCD will shortly release this RFP to support programs offering instruction in ESOL, adult basic education, and basic education in the native language (BENL).

At this time, we also want to express our support for Councilmember Gonzalez's budget initiative to add \$4 million dollars to DYCD's RFP, and urge the members of the Immigration Committee to sign on to her initiative. We also urge you to speak with your colleagues to have them sign on to this initiative as well. Additional funding for DYCD's adult literacy RFP will allow CBOs to reach greater numbers of immigrants looking to improve their English.

⁴ In the FY2006 budget, repeat IOI funded groups were notified in November 2005. Groups receiving IOI money for the first time were not identified until January/February of 2006.

Additional ESOL programs

In addition to our support of IOI and NYCALI, we also work with the Coalition for Adult Literacy to urge for increased funding for all ESOL programs, including those operated by CUNY and the public libraries. It is important that ESOL and other literacy programs are offered in a variety of settings to reach immigrant New Yorkers seeking to improve their English skills.

Once again, we thank the City Council for your great interest and support of ESOL programs. We look forward to working with you to increase the resources needed for these vital programs for the future of New York.

Thank you.

United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is the membership organization of New York City settlement houses and community centers. Founded in 1919, UNH's membership comprises one of the largest human service systems in New York City, with 35 agencies working at more than 300 sites to provide high quality services and activities to more than half million New Yorkers each year. For over 85 years, UNH has worked with its members to strengthen families and improve neighborhoods throughout the City. UNH supports the work of its members through advocacy and public policy research and analysis, technical assistance and funding and by promoting program replication and collaboration among its members.

UNH Members: Boys & Girls Harbor-CAMBA-Center for Family Life in Sunset Park - Chinese American Planning Council - Citizens Advice Bureau - Claremont Neighborhood Centers - Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation - East Side House Settlement - Educational Alliance - Queens Community House (formerly the Forest Hills Community House) - Goddard Riverside Community Center - Grand Street Settlement - Greenwich House - Hamilton-Madison House - Hartley House - Henry Street Settlement - Hudson Guild - Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement House - Kingsbridge Heights Community Center - Lenox Hill Neighborhood House - Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center - Mosholu Montefiore Community - Riverdale Neighborhood House - SCAN New York - School Settlement Association - Shorefront YM-WHA of Brighton-Manhattan Beach, Inc - Southeast Bronx Neighborhood Centers - St. Matthew's and St. Timothy's Neighborhood Center - St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation - Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center - Sunnyside Community Services - Third Street Music School Settlement - Union Settlement Association - United Community Centers - University Settlement Society

AFRICAN SERVICES
COMMITTEE

May 4, 2007

The Council of the City of New York
Office of the Speaker
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Re: ESL Classes in New York City

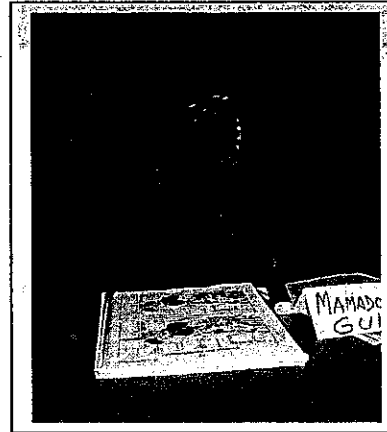
Dear Madam Speaker:

I am a teacher of English as a Second Language at African Services Committee, among others. As such I have had the great privilege over the past three years to work with a diverse group of over a hundred students from Africa and Haiti.

I have met some of them as totally dependent newcomers who came to America only three days before. They have arrived from their villages and come directly to African Services. These brave souls give big heart-warming smiles even though they don't know how to say "hello" and "goodbye" or "thank you," to ask for or receive directions, to purchase food or rent an apartment, to speak to a doctor or ask for emergency help in case of a fire or accident, to understand basic warnings, like "Look Out! Stop!" to use or identify numbers, to make or answer a phone call, to spell their names or give their addresses.

Others have studied English briefly in their country and may have been teachers themselves or held other professional positions. They hope to become sufficiently fluent to hold a job and make enough money to attend college here and share their previous training and expertise in a way that will give them a career as they benefit their new country, much as our own ancestors did.

And then there are others who have lived here for a couple of years and have managed to find work – the dishwashers, pamphlet distributors, the hair-braiders. They want to somehow connect with their neighbors and co-workers, to become a part of the community, to be able to help their children with their homework and to speak with their teachers so that their children can be in that group of New York City Public School students who do NOT drop out.



Learning English is absolutely crucial for survival in this city. In ESL classes, students not only learn to use terminology, but they also acquire information for daily living. They learn what "Don't Litter" means but also how to recycle and where the trash goes, how to make change and read the information at the Metrocard kiosk and also which is the best one to buy in their situation, how to read the electric bill or the directions on the prescription drug bottle or the food labels, and how to use the bank. This information is difficult to acquire if you do not speak English.

Over the years I have seen them grow because they have been given English classes. And, I've been delighted to watch them give back to this country. Emmanuel is pursuing his MS at Teacher's College and teaches math in the New York school system, Fatou has finished her course in the health field and works with the elderly, talented Tijiane is starting FIT this fall, Michelin is active in the PTA, Edgar conquered his computer and works at a bank. Some have become citizens.

The magnitude of their future contributions to New York is still unknown. It's too early in their development to predict that exactly. In the meantime, the students are working hard and they are extremely grateful for New York's contribution to them in the form of the opportunity to learn English. They constantly express this gratitude and ask that we pass it along to the funders. That's why I'm here today.

Sincerely,

Virginia Brobyn

Virginia Brobyn
ESL Teacher

**To learn more about the work of African Services go to:
www.africansevice.org**

**Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York
Testimony to the Council of the City of New York
Hearing on The Demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Programs
Among Immigrant Adults in New York City
May 4, 2007**

Good morning. My name is Shana Brodnax and I am the Director of Employment & Training Services at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, an agency that has served thousands of English Language Learners each year since 1921. I want to thank the City Council for sponsoring this hearing today on the demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages Programs, a subject of increased importance as proposed legislation on immigration reform requires English as a precondition to enrolling on the path to citizenship.

By way of introduction, Catholic Charities works to help solve the problems of New Yorkers in need: the neglected child, the homeless family and the hungry senior – non-Catholic and Catholic alike. We rebuild lives and touch almost every human need: promptly, locally, day in and day out. We help your neighbors, as you would like to be helped if your family were in need.

Each year Catholic Charities assists more than 100,000 individuals through our various programs such as: Employment and Training Services, Immigration Legal Services, Case Management, Eviction Prevention, and Emergency Food Programs. Throughout all of these programs, we encounter English Language Learners who deeply want to learn English to improve their job prospects, communicate with their children's teachers, participate in civil society and be in touch with the English-speaking world all around them.

My department's Refugee Resettlement Office serves nearly 500 refugees and asylees yearly who hail from over 40 countries. Asylees and refugees are exceptionally vulnerable, having escaped their countries fleeing persecution, and come to us with extensive needs. We assist them with every possible aspect of resettlement in the United States -- from learning to use an ATM to writing a résumé to attaining employment. The most important factor that contributes to success, though, is a client's level of English. We have been highly successful in utilizing scarce resources to support English Language Learners in our refugee programs. However, there are many more immigrants who need ESOL classes that are tailored to specific needs.

Many individuals are seeking English classes that offer flexibility. Clients have to fit learning English into their already busy schedule of work and family life. This can be a challenge due to the fact that many clients work long hours or late-night shifts to make ends meet. English Language Learners need classes that are offered where they work, live, pray and socialize. Class schedules need to be flexible to accommodate the busy lives of the students. Classes must be offered at various levels so that students are learning at a level appropriate for them.

Many immigrants with whom we work lack basic literacy skills in their native language and require instruction in Basic Education in the Native Language (BENL) before they are able to attend ESOL classes. BENL classes have been cut back at a time when they should be expanded. At the other end of the spectrum, immigrants who have achieved low levels of English proficiency, but who need and want greater proficiency, are not able to access ESOL instruction at an intermediate or advanced level since more and more ESOL instruction is targeted to those at the lowest levels. Special attempts to address diverse needs such as these should be made as instruction programs are developed and expanded in coming years.

Catholic Charities has worked to expand our ESOL offerings for the past five years to address these concerns. We have held classes in the Lower East Side, Washington Heights, East Harlem, the South Bronx and Kingsbridge. The classes have consistently been well attended. Students flock to the opportunity to learn – they realize that English offers an opportunity to better their life in innumerable ways. While Catholic Charities is proud of the contributions we have made to the lives of English Language Learners, we see so much more that needs to be done. The classes are severely under-funded. The funding available is inconsistent and is not flexible enough for the reality of offering English classes in underserved communities, nor does it take into account the actual start-up costs of hiring and training teachers and securing appropriate classroom space.

No one doubts that it is absolutely crucial for immigrants to learn English. As New York City's population becomes ever more diverse, learning English becomes increasingly important in every aspect of daily life. It is necessary to enable immigrants to become citizens, for immigrant parents to be active in their child's school, to access quality health care, and to gain employment that will allow families to become self-sufficient.

We have witnessed first hand that immigrants want to learn English. They are aware that without the language skills to thrive in the United States, they will remain in low-level jobs that offer little room to grow. There are critical shortages of ESOL classes throughout the city. The classes that are offered through nonprofit organizations, church groups, universities, the Department of Education and public libraries are not organized through a comprehensive citywide clearinghouse. This makes it difficult for clients to find out how to access an ESOL class in a specific neighborhood and at his or her correct level.

Catholic Charities supports efforts to increase funding aimed at English for Speakers of Other Languages programs. We must focus not only on improving the existing services, but also on creating a strong and sustainable infrastructure to support ESOL programs in a consistent and on-going manner.

Once again, thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify on this important issue.



Testimony of Frances Kreimer,
Advocacy Program Fellow at New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE)
Before the Immigration Committee of the City Council
May 4, 2007

Thank you Council Member Stewart and members of the Immigration Committee for hosting this conversation today. My name is Frances Kreimer and I am the Advocacy Program Fellow at New Immigrant Community Empowerment, or NICE. Founded in 1999, NICE is a civil rights and immigrant advocacy organization working to ensure that immigrants are informed, active, and influential in civic, governmental and public affairs. In following this mission and responding to the needs of our community, NICE has expanded over the last few years to include courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Civic Literacy. These classes quickly became our most popular program. Unfortunately, timing, language and status barriers make personal testimony by NICE's students almost impossible. My comments here this morning are based on conversations with our teachers and students, who have asked me to reiterate the ultimate importance of ESOL classes as an essential tool for empowering immigrant communities to become active participants in our city's civic and economic life.

Currently, nearly one in four New Yorkers is not English-proficient. NICE's adult ESOL students make up about 100 of the approximately 1.7 million New Yorkers over the age of five who speak English "less than very well," according to the 2000 US census. Our students come from all over Latin America, including many from Ecuador, Mexico, and Colombia. Many have been here for a significant period of time, some for up to ten or twenty years. Most work in restaurants or construction work, and many have children either here or in their countries of origin.

When I asked the students about the importance of ESOL classes, some initially had difficulty answering; they found self-evident the fundamental importance of learning English while living, working, and raising children in New York. In their responses, they focused particularly on the need for communication with neighbors, employers, and teachers. The benefits of such communication cannot be overstated, both for immigrant communities and for all New Yorkers. All of us gain when neighbors can talk to each other, when all workers can find decent jobs in safe environments and at fair wages, and when parents can speak with their children's teachers and help their sons and daughters with homework. Students also mentioned the ability to read newspapers, follow American politics, engage with American banks and financial institutions, and generally integrate into American culture as other important potential benefits of English classes. NICE's teachers, the children of immigrants, tell of the impossible role that immigrant's children are asked to play, with five-year-olds expected to translate complex medical information and credit card statements.

In addition to these basic elements of civic and economic participation, many of NICE's students also noted the importance of English in accessing basic health and human services. One woman told of being turned away from a hospital when she spoke in Spanish, and only barely being able to explain in her limited English that she had an important appointment. Her story is consistent with the 2005 New York City Comptroller's report, "Getting in the Door: Language Barriers to Health Services at New York City's Hospitals," which documented hospital communication barriers that impede the ability to access medical services.



We applaud New York's increasing commitment to essential translation services, including Local Law 73 which strengthened language access to vital health and human services, and New York State's New Hospital Language Assistance Law of 2006. However, translation services are only a partial solution. Equally important are initiatives that give the power of language access directly into the hands of those who need it, without relying on costly intermediaries. Direct English language training also incorporates essential elements of acculturation and cultural knowledge, without which literal translation is useless; NICE's English classes focus on "civic literacy," using a curriculum that combines grammar and vocabulary with more cultural knowledge of how to access health services and financial institutions. As the city improves its translation services, it has an added incentive to increase its investment in ESOL classes, both to facilitate civic and economic engagement, and as a means of reducing city budget translation costs.

Anti-immigrant groups have long argued that immigrants "avoid" learning English or "choose" not to speak English out of an aversion to integration into the mainstream of American life. The students and teachers I talked to have made it clear that such an argument is far from the truth. Rather, one of the primary impediments to immigrants learning English is a lack of opportunities, not a lack of desire. In 2001, a New York Immigration Coalition study found that ESOL classes were available for less than five percent of the one million New Yorkers who wanted to learn English. A February New York Times article confirmed that ESOL programs still are unable to accommodate the demand, with waiting lists of months, or even years for government-financed classes. For many working immigrants, private classes are simply unaffordable -- popular ESOL programs such as Zoni charge \$480 for two weeks of classes. Even local community college programs are also often out of immigrant workers' price ranges, with the cheapest, non-intensive options costing almost \$250 per unit.

Our organization is one of New York's many community based ESOL programs for which financial resources are the sole limiting factor. Mornings and evenings, students literally squeeze into our reception area and staff offices, and new students approach us almost every day. This overwhelming desire and need for learning is both inspiring and daunting -- the staff remains humbled by students' commitment to study the new language, but frustrated by our lack of resources to respond adequately. We know that dozens of community organizations around the city face a similar situation, and we look forward to working with City Council in attempting to meet this demand. At NICE, we also train young English-proficient immigrants and children of immigrants to teach the ESOL classes -- a job development program that also could expand enormously with the proper resources.

NICE's students asked me to convey their most sincere gratitude for your attention and commitment to this issue, and their hopes that City Council will continue to increase its investment in the language empowerment of New York's immigrant communities for the greater benefit of all residents of the city.

Riverside Language Program

TESTIMONY FOR CITY COUNCIL: FRIDAY, 4 MAY 2007

490 Riverside Drive New York, NY 10027
Phone: 212 662-3200 Fax: 212 870-6841

My name is Phyllis Berman; I've been the Executive Director of the Riverside Language Program (RLP), located in space rented from the Riverside Church on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, since 1979. We were among the six community-based organizations (CBOs) and City University (CUNY) colleges to be funded for adult basic education (ABE) by the New York State Education Department (NY-SED) when they first opened up these federal funds to competitive bidding (which had originally, from 1964 to 1978, gone only to the Board of Education).

When we began Riverside in 1979 – and it is still so today – we designed it to serve a particular niche which refugee resettlement agencies around NYC had told us was desperately needed by the population of recently-arrived immigrants and refugees from all over the world who came to the U.S. – and particularly to NYC – 365 days each year. What these newly-arrived adults needed, we were told, was intensive English classes that began frequently, met for many hours each day, and ended quickly (and successfully!) with students whose English language proficiency increased so fast that they would soon be able to move on to their next steps in the resettlement process: going to training programs or colleges or graduate schools; getting and keeping jobs equivalent to their past experience and training that could support them and their families.

As a result, we designed Riverside as a full-time daytime program, with classes meeting five hours a day for six-week cycles; new overlapping cycles began every three-four weeks throughout the school year so that half our teaching staff would work mid-August to mid-June and half would work early September to late June. In that way, new immigrants and refugees would not have to wait more than three or four weeks before they could be admitted into the next class cycle.

Since 1979, we have served more than 15,000 adults from all over the world in our intensive ESOL program. Most of them were able, in less than a year, to move from ESOL classes into the English-speaking world as students, workers, parents, etc. The crises throughout the world have not lessened the numbers of immigrants and refugees who continue to come to NYC with hope for their future, but the numbers of spaces available to ESOL programs throughout the city are far fewer than the need for them. So I am urging you to increase the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative (NYCALI) funding, supporting the bill of Council Member Sara Gonzalez to add an additional \$4 million to NYCALI '08.

For several years, City Council members have thoughtfully added Immigration Opportunity Initiative (IOI) funding, which has supported ESOL classes around the city and increased the number of ESOL students for whom we had spaces in our classes. In the first year of IOI funding, Council members gave that money to the Literacy office of the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) which had been working with CBOs offering ESOL classes since the 1980s when NYCALI first began, and knew intimately those organizations equipped to run successful programs. DYCD, by monitoring the programs for quality and for integrity, was also able to look at the "big

picture" across the five boroughs to make sure that the various needs of different constituencies was being met.

Unlike many of our ABE colleagues, Riverside is not a "neighborhood" program. Throughout our history, we have had students from all over the city (our current numbers show 38.5% come from Queens, 23% from Brooklyn, 22% from Manhattan, 14% from the Bronx, and 2.5% from Staten Island). Because our program is so intensive – at least five hours a day in English classes, five days a week – newly-arrived immigrants and refugees have traveled out of their neighborhoods to come to RLP because our history shows that people learn English quickly here. Often, a neighborhood school has students who come from the same country and all speak the same language. At Riverside, quite the opposite is true: students come from every neighborhood in the city; they come from all over the world; and the only language they have in common is the one they are learning: English. Having such a diverse population is, in fact, imperative for a successful ESOL program.

But here's our problem: last year, when City Council members decided, instead of giving the decision of funding to DYCD as they had done in the past, to make funding decisions themselves, funding programs based in their own district, Riverside, serving students from every district, received none of the IOI funds because we're one of the very few **citywide** ESOL programs.

I want to urge you to baseline this important IOI funding, adding it to the far-too-inadequate NYCALI funding so that spaces are available in ESOL classes for many more students in need, and I want to urge you to let DYCD make decisions that include not only neighborhood CBOs but citywide ones so that the full panoply of needs of non-English speakers is met by a rich variety of programs.

Further, I want to urge that IOI funding decisions are made before the start of each fiscal year so that programs receiving these funds don't have to go half a fiscal year without those extra funds, requiring them to double their teaching staff and their rental costs for part of the year in order to use a full year's budget in a six-month (or less) period of time.

Those of you who have dealt with DYCD know that the contract and fiscal process one must go through for each contract is cumbersome. If City Council adds the IOI funds to the NYCALI funds and enables DYCD to make appropriate funding decisions throughout the city for CBOs receiving these funds, CBOs will be able to use all the funds to run classes and other services for our ESOL students rather than using huge amounts of administrative time (and cost) doing multiple contracts, multiple monthly bills, and multiple record keeping forms demanded by each individual contract source at DYCD. While we would be delighted to receive many small IOI contracts from Council members because we're serving their constituents from all over the city, it would maximize our effect to receive one large IOI contract as part of our NYCALI funds.

Thank you for giving your attention to the enormous need for funding for ESOL instruction for the thousands of non-English speaking adults in NYC.

Testimony Friday, May 03, 2007

Queens Community House

Rachid Eladlouni, Assistant Director

Good Morning Councilmember Stewart, members of NYC City Council and staff of the NYC City Council. My name is Rachid Eladlouni, representing Queens Community House. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about NYCALI and IOI funding and the needs that they serve. Queens Community, formerly Forest Hills Community House, is a settlement house with 16 sites spanning the borough of Queens and connecting to nearly 20,000 Queens residents through our spectrum of programs and services.

In our Jackson Heights site, we have coordinated city and state funding sources to provide comprehensive immigrant services to over 2,700 immigrants reflecting the diversity of this corridor of Queens. The majority of students reside in Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, Corona and Woodside. Our students, cumulatively, represent 40 language groups. Our adult education program is a highly respected program, scoring a 3.8 out of 4 in students achieving educational gain (State assessment). Last year, educational gains for ESOL Beginning Literacy exceeded 75%. English language and literacy, Citizenship and Civics are taught by highly trained full-time staff. All our staff speak another language in addition to English. Some staff are multi-lingual speaking 3-5 languages. Adults seek out our program to learn English for the purpose of improving their lives; supporting their children's educational advancement; attaining higher paying positions; and becoming more civically involved. Despite our ability to serve 600 immigrants per day, we still turn away 3 of every 4 applicants because we do not have the slots to meet the enormous need. Our immigrant communities do want to learn English.

NYCALI funding and IOI funding are essential programs that give us the ability to meet the diverse learning needs of immigrant communities.

NYCALI is an adult education initiative geared toward adult learners meeting specific goals. At Queens Community House the primary goal is learning English. Secondary goals include obtaining and/or improving employment and, among parents, more involvement in children's school. In our program, students attend 12.5 hours of classes for a 10-week session for each level of English. It may take a student 4 sessions, equivalent to 40 weeks, September through June, to move from Level 1 to Level 4.

IOI is used by Queens Community House to support citizenship classes and emerging English classes, the latter for immigrant students who have limited literacy in their native language. Queens Community House boasts a 95% success rate with citizenship students passing the citizenship exam. The emerging English class is geared toward those populations having little schooling. For most students in this category, an ESOL program may seem intimidating. Our instructor gears this program so students gain the skills to advance to our level 1 NYCALI classes. IOI is, therefore, an essential funding source for our community. NYCALI's funding must be shored up so that immigrant adults have access to intensive English classes that demonstrate concrete results. Funding is needed to maximize classroom slots across the city. Additionally, instructional hour rates need to be increased to support teacher salaries, integration of computer learning with English instruction, student testing, additional student supports and administrative support.

Last year we experienced a loss of \$110,000 to our language programs. This was due to NYCALI funding cuts citywide. In addition, our IOI allocation was not renewed although we had received this funding since its inception. These losses caused us to close our citizenship and literacy classes in March. In 2006-2007 we could have served 3,000 immigrants. Instead we served 2,700. We are asking that the IOI initiative be supported and expanded, but also distributed in a manner, which acknowledges past success.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Katie Kim. I am a program coordinator who develops and implements the ESL/Civics program for immigrant adults at YWCA of Queens in Flushing, where 65% of the population is foreign-born immigrants. Funded by IOI, we serve over 400 people a year in our adult ESL program. Each term, I either conduct a survey or arrange individual counseling for the prospective students.

In my last survey, I asked participants about their motivations and expectations of taking ESL classes. Two major reasons why they were taking ESL classes had to do with (1) getting a job and (2) better participating in their kids' education.

Most of our students are female Asian immigrants who already possess a high school diploma. In fact, about 60% of them are college graduates. However, although 70% of our students are eligible to work in terms of their age, only 20% of them are economically active. Most students are participating in a small business within their communities where they don't need to speak English well. I have no doubt that it will be even more beneficial to America if our students who got higher education and work skills overcome the language barrier and fully contribute to this society.

Getting a job or a better job in this society is not the only reason that these women are struggling with English. They are mothers of our kids who were born or are going to school here in America. Since a lot of them immigrated to America in hopes of offering their children better chances for education and prosperity, they want to participate in PTA, and education related activities and hold strong relationships with school staff members. However, again the lack of English proficiency is the biggest barrier for them to do so.

In addition, they are eager to learn English to promote communication within family, particularly with their children who would speak English regularly.

We also have out-of-school youth who are preparing for the GED exam. Many of them are from recent immigrant families and still need language training. Although most students speak English quite fluently, they lack confidence in writing essays, which would advance them to pass the GED, obtain employment, and receive college education.

In order to better acquaint you with our program, I would like to introduce some excerpts from the testimonials written by our ESL students.

"I am new in this country. English is my problem. (when) I speak (better) English, then I (will) start nursing job because this is my future and my dream."

-- Tejinder Kaur from Pakistan, preparing GED exam, 20 years old

"I came to America a few years ago. My family can't English so we are (always in a) dark (mood). Actually, I (am) really embarrassed to my kids, because I don't speak English (well). I (always) thought I need to learn English but (I couldn't because) I did not know this (free English language) program. These days, I (am) really happy because I met this program. I think this program will give happiness to many people like me. I wish this program will continue."

-- Soojung Lee, from South Korea, 37 years old

"I have to learn English because I live in America and most people speak English. If you do not know how to speak English, there are many problems such as you don't know how to take a bus or subway; you don't know how to explain where you want to go or what you want to do. You face even more problems when you are working with other people. If I don't speak English, I have to depend on others at every moment and every matter."

-- Hetal Patel from India, 34 years old

"I came to the USA almost 7 years ago. But until today, I couldn't make enough time to learn English. Now all my children went to school. I need to have communication with their teachers. Also I feel that I have to have more and better communication with my children."

-- Keiko Park from Japan, 48 years old

"Thank you very much for offering free English classes for new immigrants. I came here almost 20 years ago but I did not have a chance to learn English. Being late though, I want to learn English step by step. How much better life I could enjoy living in America (if I spoke better English)!!"

-- Sophia Kim from South Korea, 55 years old

About 70% of our students were even unable to address their issues as quoted above. Tai-Shin Hur, a 70 years-old permanent resident who is preparing citizenship exam told me about her experience in her native language. It was when she was trying to find a government building where she can get the application form for citizenship exam. She said that she felt as if she became a beggar when she got completely lost and did not know how to ask where she is, how to get to her destination, and so forth.

I believe that getting rid of language barrier through education is a matter of human rights as much as it is linked directly with quality of life. On behalf of all the immigrants in the ESOL/Civics program at the YWCA of Queens, who are struggling with language barrier and cultural difference, I would like to emphasize that we still need a long-term and stable funding for ESL education. Not only will these benefit the participants but the entire American society as long as understanding of American culture and English language unifies the Nation of immigrants.

Thank you.



METROPOLITAN COUNCIL ON JEWISH POVERTY
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City Council Immigration and Civil Rights Committee

***The Demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages Programs among
Immigrant Adults in New York City***

May 4, 2007

**Testimony of
Gloria Blumenthal, Director of Immigrant Initiatives**

Thank you, Chairman Stewart and members of the committee for the opportunity to comment on the Demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages Programs among Immigrant Adults in New York City.

My name is Gloria Blumenthal and I am the director of Immigrant Initiatives at the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, known to many of you and those in the field as "Met Council." Met Council is a non-profit organization representing and coordinating social welfare advocacy efforts of the grassroots Jewish Community Councils and providing crisis and poverty intervention services without regard to race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation or language. Our network of local Jewish community councils, known as JCCs, covers 150 neighborhoods throughout the City and together we serve more than 100,000 clients each year. The majority of clients served by Met Council, its network and partners, are immigrants from all over the world.

From the first day Met Council opened its doors more than three decades ago; we have been serving new immigrants and refugees in two major ways. First, we help individuals adjust to the immediate needs of starting a new life in a new country with housing, furniture, clothing, and cash assistance if necessary. Once their immediate needs have been met, we assist individuals in becoming more independent, self sufficient and active members of their local communities through social services navigation, entitlement assistance, job placement, and civic participation services.

Met Council has initiated several major programs specifically in the last five years designed to aid immigrants and refugees in becoming self-sufficient, strengthening their families and improving their living conditions:

- Assists poor and near-poor immigrant adults from the Former Soviet Union find employment and progress in career paths in two areas: health care and information technology. Clients are offered training in Emergency Medical Technical (EMT) services or Certification readiness in UNIX (Solaris) computer systems. This program has been extremely popular in the FSU community and has enabled immigrants to simultaneously find employment and serve their communities.
- Provides information to immigrants on immigration status and assistance with applications to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (formerly known as INS).
- Oversees a network of agencies providing information and assistance with applications to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service and Civics English to those preparing for their citizenship examination.
- Provides financial and entitlements assistance, translation services, and recreational programs to émigré youth and their families from the Central Asian republics of the Former Soviet Union, with the goal of promoting peer relations, encouraging a positive outlook towards attaining future career goals, and improving family crises.
- Provides domestic violence prevention, family education, and a safe social environment to Cuban and Haitian entrants, Amerasian immigrants including Bukharians and FSU refugees through seminars on family communication, interpersonal skills, and self-esteem building.
- Provides transitional supports (child care/health care referral and services navigation); employment preparation (skills training, resume preparation, and job counseling); job placement (placing clients into unsubsidized employment); and citizenship and entitlement assistance to recently arrived immigrants.

Met Council urges this committee to continue and increase its commitment to fund English language programs to immigrants to ensure that they will achieve success in the workplace and in the community. English programs are filled to capacity and there are waiting lists. Furthermore, immigrants ask for more particular English programs to help them integrate more easily into the life of the New York community.

English language programs are needed for:

- Simple, survival needs as being able to shop and ask directions;
- As a component of vocational training.
- Workplace literacy. This is important for immigrants in the workplace to progress in their professions.
- Civics/English programs for immigrant to prepare for their citizenship exams
- For elderly who provide childcare to their grandchildren enabling their children to go to work. These grandparents are often called upon to fulfill parental roles such as taking their grandchildren to the doctor or meeting with teachers. Not having the necessary English capacity make them dependent on their young charges who translate, often selectively. English language programs will give them the capacity to maintain the “parental” role and contribute to their self esteem.

Met Council recommends that City Council

- Support Council Member Gonzales’ \$ 4 million commitment to literacy programs.
- Seek funding opportunities for funding to the elderly.
- Seek funding opportunities for funding for vocational English.
- Develop funding for creative programs connecting English to the workplace.
- Develop funding for content English programs that help immigrants learn about American institutions such as healthcare, education and finance.

To enable immigrants to succeed in work, family and community, English facility is crucial. Studies have shown that those who attain language facility will more easily integrate into American society, achieve success in the world of work and will contribute to the well being of the community. English programs must continue as is and must be developed meet the changing needs of the immigrant community. Survival English will ensure survival but more specific English will ensure vitality and success of this major portion of the New York City's population.

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

IMMIGRATION COMMITTEE HEARING

May 4, 2007

Elana Broitman

Director, City Policy and Public Affairs

Chairman Stewart, Council Members, thank you for allowing me to make a presentation to you today. I represent UJA-Federation of New York, which helps to serve a broad spectrum of New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs by supporting a network of over 100 social service agencies.

UJA-Federation of New York

UJA-Federation's mission is "caring for those in need, rescuing those in harm's way, and renewing and strengthening the Jewish people in New York, in Israel, and around the world." We are a funding and coordinating body for more than 100 nonprofit health and human service and educational agencies in New York City, many of which are dedicated to serving all New Yorkers with need, in large part through contracts with the City's Department for Youth and Community Development.

Last year, we raised about \$250 million from tens of thousands of donors, which we use in large part to support this network of not-for-profit agencies. However, our work would not be possible without the successful public-private partnership that exists between the New York City Council and UJA-Federation. While UJA-Federation does not take government funding, our agencies rely on public funding, in addition to philanthropic support, to provide a myriad of services, including immigrant services, health care, case management, affordable housing, legal aid, mental health counseling, and childcare.

UJA's English as a Second Language Classes in New York City

Our network of agencies serves immigrants throughout New York. Some of our agencies, such as the New York Association for New Americans (NYANA), provide English language instruction to immigrants from all the boroughs - beyond their headquarters in lower Manhattan. Others such as our networks of YM-YWHAs and Jewish Community Councils serve populations in their neighborhoods in ways tailored to their communities: some populations desire citizenship preparation, others vocational support, and yet others help in being able to communicate with their children's and grandchildren's schools.

All of the ESOL providers report that they must turn away many more students than they serve because they simply do not have the resources to enable them to serve all of those seeking services. For example, one of our agencies from Brooklyn reported a waiting list of over 600 for ESOL and more for ESOL/Citizenship programs.

Funding

Currently, there are a few sources of funding for ESOL programs, although added together they are still not enough to support New York City's need.

IOI

One of the main sources is the \$9.25 million IOI fund that you have appropriated for two years in a row. We are deeply appreciative of this funding. In addition to being such a significant amount, it is beneficial because it comes with fewer time and staff consuming reporting requirements than analogous federal streams. Also with IOI, the Council supports emerging immigrant groups, which often have a more difficult time successfully applying for the very competitive requests for proposals. UJA-Federation agencies from Brooklyn to the Bronx receive IOI to serve immigrant groups from many different countries of origin with different needs. We understand that you are considering increasing IOI, and we would strongly support you in such efforts.

While we very much appreciated that such a significant amount was available this year for IOI, I know that you are aware of the problems that IOI recipients had in actually receiving the funding. I know of groups that still do not have a contract. Others that may have a registered contract still have not been reimbursed for services that they have essentially "floated" on behalf of the City. As you can appreciate, this situation is very difficult for non-profits, whose generally low budgets are stretched to meet all of the demands of their clients. Some groups have been able to begin services prior to receiving payment by subsidizing them from other parts of their budgets, but this is an incredible strain on them. Others were not in a position to do so, and I wonder whether they will be able to spend all of their allotted funding when they receive it so close to the end of the fiscal year.

Thus, our position is to: request the Council to restore the full IOI funding for FY 2008; support an increase to be able to support more groups; and increase the minimum amount of each grant to \$50,000 in order to allow groups to support effective programs. In future years, we would hope to work with you to convince the Mayor to baseline this funding. The Council has done its work in demonstrating the need of such programs. After three years of funding, the initiative can demonstrate results, so that it can become a permanent part of the budget.

Adult Literacy

Another source of funding for ESOL is the adult literacy program, which is funded in part by federal sources (WIA and the Community Development Block Grant) and partly by baselined city tax levy. Many know this program as NYCALI. The funding for adult literacy has not risen in well over a decade, so that in relation to inflation it has actually diminished.

In the summer of 2006, the State declined to fund DYCD's application for literacy programs in New York City. This raised the prospect of tens of established literacy programs having to lay off staff and close classrooms. Luckily, the administration provided \$3.6 million to save 18 of the groups. This year, as these contracts run out, we await a new request for proposals from DYCD. We were grateful to see that the Executive Budget added funding for adult literacy: \$3.8 million in FY 2008, and \$5.3

million per year beyond that. We hope to see all those funds added to the funding DYCD was planning for the RFP. Yet, that is still not enough. Current literacy funding supports programs serving less than ten percent of the need for such classes in New York City.

That is why we are very supportive of Council Member Gonzalez' initiative to add \$4 million for the adult literacy RFP. This funding would add much needed resources for ESOL and English instruction for native speakers. We hope that you all will cosponsor it.

Thank you, again, for inviting me to testify today. I would be pleased to answer any questions.



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HARRY AND JEANETTE
WEINBERG BUILDING

- We work with emigrant populations from a variety of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds who are primarily from the countries of the former Soviet Union, but also from China, Albania, Pakistan, Israel, Turkey, Italy, Hong-Kong, Bulgaria, Poland, former Yugoslavia, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Afghanistan. They are intelligent and motivated to learn, but they are unable to effectively read, write, or speak English, and they lack employment skills and knowledge of the American job market. Therefore, they currently are unable to achieve self-sufficiency through employment.
- Many of the Marks JCH's clients have multiple problems and needs, such as unfamiliarity with the new culture and bureaucracy, raising children as single parents, and supporting and helping their school-age children in a school system that is foreign to them. The Marks JCH combines intensive language classes with vocational counseling and case management, removing barriers to self-sufficiency and helping clients to achieve employment, reduce dependence on public assistance, achieve citizenship and voting skills, and become more involved in community activities.
- Our average waiting list is about 150 people even though we never advertise our program in the mass media. If we advertised, we'd have such an enormous influx of students that we wouldn't be able to handle them. In some periods of the year the list is so long that prospective students have to wait for 2 to 4 months.
- This semester, we have 8 classes, serving 180 clients
- At the moment we have 3 ESOL programs:
NYCALI (funding source- the DYCD)
IOI (funding source- the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty)
ALE (funding source- the State Education Department)
We received a two-month extension for NYCALI (that is until August 31, 2007)
The IOI and ALE funding expires on June 30, 2007.
The biggest demand for the ESL classes is coming from the low level students, and we usually are unable to serve all of them due to the insufficient funds.
The class size is also bigger compared to the projected average daily attendance because we try to enroll as many clients as possible due to the vulnerability of funding.
- The higher level students (level 3 or intermediate) will have to wait much longer since we don't have enough funds to open more than two or three classes per fiscal year.
- Through its ESOL program, the Marks JCH of Bensonhurst serves the neediest clients in its service area - those with the lowest levels of English proficiency who lack the skills necessary to obtain employment and function effectively in society. We serve clients from Bay Ridge, Borough Park, Gravesend, Brighton Beach, Staten Island, and of course from Bensonhurst.



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***Testimony of José Davila, Director of Education Advocacy for the New York Immigration Coalition,
before the New York City Council Immigration Committee on the Demand for English for Speakers
of Other Languages (ESOL) Programs Among Immigrant Adults***

May 4, 2007

Good morning. Chairmen Stewart and members of the City Council Immigration Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify at this very important hearing on the Demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Programs Among Immigrant Adults. My name is José Davila and I am the Director of Education Advocacy for the New York Immigration Coalition, an umbrella policy and advocacy organization for over 200 member groups that work with newcomers to our city, state and country.

As New York City's population becomes more diverse, knowledge of English is increasingly important in every facet of life. Immigrants live in every area of the city, filling important workforce needs in key sectors of the city's economy. Mastering the English language not only enables immigrants to become citizens, but also enables them to access quality health care, increase their safety at the workplace, move from low-skilled jobs to higher-skilled and higher-paying jobs, and play an active role in their children's education.

English instruction has become more critical than ever to passing the naturalization exam, because planned changes such as more civics questions, a new reading comprehension section, and longer writing and reading tasks will only make it harder to pass without adequate language skills. But without more adult education funding, citizenship will increasingly be out of reach for much of the immigrant population.

Over one of four New York City residents is not proficient in English, according to the 2000 Census. That amounts to around 1.7 million adults living in the city who do not speak English. Many immigrants' desire to learn English is stifled by the lack of opportunities to do so. According to several reports, including a 2001 New York Immigration Report entitled *Eager for English*, there are so few publicly-funded adult English class seats that only 1-in-20 immigrants will have the opportunity to learn English. Insufficient funding and long waiting lists for English classes prevent immigrants from learning the language and fully participating in our society.

The following recommendations should be implemented by the Mayor and City Council:

I) Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI)

I would like to first thank the City Council for their continued leadership on the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI). This current fiscal year, the IOI was included in the city budget at \$9.25 million. IOI supports over 140 immigrant and community organizations to provide vital adult English and civics classes, as well as immigration and immigrant-worker legal services. Unfortunately, as in past years,

Mayor Bloomberg has again failed to include the IOI in his proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year. As a result, again it falls to the City Council to restore this funding.

We urge the City Council to restore this funding and work with the Mayor to baseline and increase IOI funding in the FY'08 Budget, as City Council Speaker Christine Quinn committed to at a recent meeting with the board of the New York Immigration Coalition. We also support City Council efforts to increase IOI funding that would increase the individual grant amount to at least \$50,000, support additional qualified organizations, and establish a separate initiative for city-wide and borough-wide legal service providers. Moreover, it is imperative that the City Council and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) ensure that IOI supports qualified groups and that funds reach the providers in a much more timely fashion. We agree with dozens of groups, including UJA-Federation of New York and United Neighborhood Houses, that it is time for the Council's investment to be made permanent, so that the Council can turn its focus to additional immigrant needs.

II) New York City Adult Literacy Initiative (NYCALI)

While we urged the Mayor to increase funding for the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative (NYCALI) by \$20 million in FY'08, the \$3.8 million FY'08 increase and \$5.3 million FY'09 increase in the Executive Budget demonstrates his commitment to moving in the direction of serving many more adult learners. This program has not only served immigrants and other adult learners through ESOL, but also Basic Education in the Native Language (BENL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and General Equivalency Diploma (GED) services. Despite the smaller than needed increase in adult literacy funding proposed by the Mayor, we consider this a down payment towards truly beginning to meet the needs of millions of adult learners across our city. To this end, we support the City Council's efforts to match the Mayor's NYCALI funding increase through Council Member Gonzalez's \$4 million Initiative. Moreover, it is vital that funding be increased for all sectors of the adult literacy field including community-based organization, the City University of New York, our public libraries, the Department of Education and other providers.

In conclusion, these investments in adult English classes are increasingly necessary in light of the potential federal passage of comprehensive immigration reform and the subsequent implementation of a legalization and integration program for hundreds of thousands of immigrant New Yorkers. Our city government can play a stronger role in bolstering our community infrastructure to meet this potential huge need to help immigrant learn English and eventually become citizens.

Immigration Hearing at City Council
5/4/07

Good morning dear Members of City Council:

First of all I would like to thank you all for this opportunity to testify about the demand of E.S.O.L. and Civics classes.

My name is Luz Rojas. I have been working as a teacher for the Latin American Integration Center, in Woodside, Queens, for five years.

Although, our ESL classes are in high demand, The Latin American Integration Center does not have enough resources to offer classes to so many immigrants that are interested in learning English and Civics. Whenever we have an enrollment period for classes, unfortunately we need to place students in a long waiting list. For example, we have 1,027 people on a waiting list we started just last August!! We don't have the funds to offer more classes and so people have to wait for far too long. They get frustrated and discouraged and they have a hard time adjusting to life in New York.

Through these years, I have seen how immigrant students, who *have* had the opportunity to attend E.S.L. and Civics classes, have improved their lives. Parents can help children with their homework, workers can get better salaries, and legal residents become American Citizens.

Having better English skills help these people not only to improve all of the above, but to start socializing and integrating in their work places. It also gives them a sense of belonging, and let's not forget that language is culture too. By learning the language of the country they are currently living in, much of the American's traditions become theirs too.

Immigrants bring a tremendous amount to New York City. The least that we can do is show them that they are welcome here by making more classes available to them. A waiting list of over 1,000 people speaks for itself. Please do all that you can to reduce the size of our waiting list by providing more funds for classes!

Thank you.



TESTIMONY TO NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

Immigration Committee of the City Council

May 4, 2007

By Jude Pierre

Manager of Adult & Family Literacy Programs at CAMBA

Dear Council Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today about the critical need to support and increase the availability of free, high quality ESOL courses in New York City.

My name is Jude Pierre, and I am the Manager of Adult & Family Literacy Programs for CAMBA. CAMBA is one of Brooklyn's largest community-based organizations, serving over 30,000 individuals annually. We provide a wide-array of integrated services to families and individuals in the following program areas: Housing and Housing Services, HIV/AIDS and Health Related Services, Economic Development, Family and Youth Services, and Education and Training. Our mission is to provide services which connect people with opportunities to enhance their quality of life.

Many of CAMBA's programs are specifically targeted to help immigrants and refugees feel welcome, safe and valued in America by providing them with free job training, legal services, domestic violence counseling, and of course ESOL and Civics courses. Each year, CAMBA serves over 8,000 recent immigrants and refugees from Guyana, Haiti, and other Caribbean countries, the former Soviet Union, Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere. Currently, over one third of our clients are immigrants or refugees, 24% of whom are from the Caribbean, 22% from Latin America and 18% from Eastern Europe.

CAMBA has been providing ESOL courses to newly-arrived immigrants since our founding thirty years ago in our work with refugees from Southeast Asia living in Flatbush. Since 1993, CAMBA has provided ESOL and Civics classes to hundreds of immigrants annually through both DYCD-funded programs and its BRIA-funded Refugee Social Services program. We offer ESOL/Civics and ABE/GED Prep courses to over 500 residents three times a day, five days a week. Our classes operate at full capacity every day; however, we still have a list of over 400 ESOL applicants who are still waiting to be placed in classes either at CAMBA or at other literacy centers where they have been referred.

The need for quality classes offered at multiple times in convenient locations remains high, and CAMBA aggressively seeks State and City funds to meet these needs. We are grateful to again

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Services • Quality Housing - Services & Development • Immigration, Refugee & Diversity Programs
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receive IOI funding for ESOL/Civics classes this year, which has enabled us to teach 120 residents of whom 69% have improved at least one literacy level.

However, it is important that the City Council support quality programs to ensure that students are given the best opportunity to learn in a supportive, professional, and caring environment. CAMBA's literacy programs are outcome-focused to ensure that residents gain the listening, speaking, reading, writing, civics, and mathematics skills to function as productive citizens, parents, and employees. Administering programs that succeed in meeting the National Reporting Standards and ensuring best practices require a strong information technology-base, a well-trained and dedicated teaching force, and skilled managers.

According to the November 2006 report on the lack of ESOL classes in New York, *Lost in Translation*, by the Center for an Urban Future, the inability for immigrants to improve their English language skills directly translates into their earning ability. Without access to free, on-demand professionally-led classroom instruction in ESOL, immigrants and refugees in New York City face the real possibility of a lifetime of working in dead-end, low-paying jobs, often relying on public benefits. The report notes the following:

Immigrant New Yorkers are more likely to be in or near poverty. Over one million immigrants were at or below 150 percent of the poverty line last year. Statewide, more than one in every four (26.7 percent) foreign-born residents fell into that category, including 866,000 immigrants in New York City. Mayor Bloomberg's Commission for Economic Opportunity reports that in 2000, nearly 35 percent of the city's foreign-born workers earned an average hourly wage of under \$10.18. While relatively greater economic hardships might be expected of those who left their native countries for a chance at something better, immigrants' limited English skills block their access to some of the most reliable routes out of poverty.

I have been working at CAMBA since 1996. First, I taught ESOL and GED Prep classes until 2002; I have been managing the literacy programs since 2003. Thus, I have been a personal witness to the positive impact that access to our ESOL programs has on lives and livelihood of immigrants and refugees. In particular, I remember one student, whom I will call Eddy.

Eddy came to the U.S. from Haiti in the mid 1990s. From 1998 to 2000, he attended ESOL and, then, GED Preparation classes at CAMBA and at Walt Whitman Junior High School. Eddy was one of my GED Prep students. He got his GED diploma in 2000. About a month ago, I got a call from our front desk. Someone was inquiring about the possibility of working here as a teacher. He happened to ask whether I was still working at CAMBA and explained that he used to be my student. I rushed to the front desk; and there was Eddy, taller, older, professionally dressed, and ready to confidently discuss his desire and readiness to teach at the literacy center.

Eddy's resume shows that, after getting his GED, he attended Kingsborough Community College from 2000 to 2002, working on a degree in Computer Sciences. In 2003, he transferred to Brooklyn College, where he is currently working on a BA in English. He did get an Associate Degree in Computer Sciences in 2004; he is scheduled to receive his BA in English this coming June. In terms of employment, Eddy worked in the computer lab at Kingsborough in 2002 via the college's work-study program. At Brooklyn College, still through the college's work-study

program, he has worked in the computer lab and at the Circulation Desk in the Library. In the summer of 2004, he worked as a Sales Associate at Staples Center in Flatbush. Having interviewed him and checked his references, I am currently working on a hiring packet which may lead to his being hired by CAMBA as a Teacher's Aide in the next few days. Of course, this position may change after he graduates and based on his performance. Eddy's ultimate goal is to be a Professor of Linguistics, so he is currently planning to get his master's and doctorate degrees in the field. This is one of countless success stories showing how immigrants who are empowered through ESOL programs in a given community will, more often than not, return and help sustain and strengthen the community.

I would like to close by again reiterating the very real need to support the expansion of high quality ESOL programs in New York to meet the current and future demand. Research has made clear the connection between acquiring English language skills and improving one's economic and social standing. We have the programs in place throughout New York which can help immigrants and refugees gain or improve their English language skills. What we lack, and what the City Council is in a position to provide, are the resources to make these high quality, successful programs available to every individual in New York and, therefore, give all newcomers an opportunity to succeed.

Thank you.

HIGHBRIDGE COMMUNITY LIFE CENTER

CITY COUNCIL HEARING

May 4, 2007

There have been a number of reports and studies on the challenges faced by people trying to become more self-sufficient economically, to advocate for themselves and their families within the health system, and to engage more fully with their children's education. The one common theme tying these separate reports is that the ability to understand, speak, read and write in English is critical. In its report on *Increasing Opportunity and Reducing Poverty in New York City*, the New York City Commission for Economic Opportunity listed the lack of English language skills as one of the most critical barriers New Yorkers face in obtaining employment at a salary that will enable them to support a family.

A study by the Harvard School of Public Health documented that adults with low literacy tend to seek treatment at later stages of serious illnesses, are less able to manage chronic health conditions, and often don't know how to take medications properly. Studies have also shown that a parent's education level is the strongest predictor of whether or not a child will be raised in poverty.

According to the last census, immigrants make up 40% of New York City's population. Many lack the English language skills needed to fully participate as workers, parents, and community members. The federal Office of Budget Management has identified Adult Literacy, including ESL, as one of only three programs they rated as 'Effective.' Yet only 62,000 adults (4% of the people who need literacy services) are enrolled in ESL or other programs. Most have to wait on long waiting lists for the chance to learn English, due to a lack of funding to support ESL and other adult literacy programs at New York City's community based organization, library and CUNY adult education programs.

Here at Highbridge Community Life Center we have seen the benefits to participants and students from learning English. In 2006, students who were fluent in English earned an average of \$2.07/hour more than those who were not. For employed ESL students, 95% felt that their classes helped them to maintain and advance in their jobs, by helping them to improve their English skills, and 33% received salary increases. Seventy students obtained employment, 39 entered job training, 163 increased their involvement in their children's education, and 224 improved their knowledge of health literacy.

Learning to speak English is necessary for functioning in New York City as a worker, parent, and community member. Lack of English skills has repeatedly been identified as a critical factor in the economic health – not just of immigrant families – but of the city itself. There are hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers in need of literacy and ESL services. There are programs throughout the city that can effectively provide this service. The only thing that has been lacking is a greater governmental commitment.



The Effectiveness of New York City Adult Literacy Programs

In program year 2005, New York's literacy programs met or exceeded the targets established under the National Reporting System requirement of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.¹

Students showing educational gain

| Instructional level | NYC | NYS | State Targets |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|---------------|
| Beginning Literacy | 35% | 31% | 22% |
| Beginning Basic Education | 37% | 34% | 30% |
| BE Intermediate Low | 36% | 33% | 32% |
| BE Intermediate High | 22% | 24% | 35% |
| ESL Beginning Literacy | 31% | 27% | 31% |
| ESL Beginning | 43% | 40% | 30% |
| ESL Intermediate Low | 45% | 40% | 35% |
| ESL Intermediate High | 42% | 37% | 35% |
| ESL Low Advanced | 39% | 36% | 32% |
| ESL High Advanced | 18% | 18% | 30% |
| Total | 33% | 31% | N/A |

Student goals achieved

| Stated goal at enrollment | NYC | NYS | State Targets |
|--|-----|-----|---------------|
| Entered employment | 84% | 79% | 30% |
| Retained employment | 52% | 52% | 42% |
| Obtained a GED or high school diploma | 97% | 75% | 31% |
| Entered post-secondary education or training | 91% | 78% | 32% |

There are thousands of people in New York who can't get into classes. For example, at Turning Point we close the waiting list at 200 names. We turn people away from the waiting list every day.

For City Council Hearing
May 4, 2007

¹ Statistics generated by ALIES®, the Literacy Assistance Center's data management service. Retrieved from the World Wide Web http://lacnyc.org/ALIES/ny_stats.htm on December 1, 2006.



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*deceased

May 4, 2007

The City Council Immigration
and Civil Rights Committee

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Maureen Doherty and I am an ESL Counselor at the Jewish Community Center of Staten Island. We were funded by City Council Immigrant Opportunity Initiative for a year to provide English as a Second Language to Staten Island immigrants. I am here today to validate the need for ESL for our immigrants on Staten Island. Allow me to give you a brief overview of the population that I am here to represent.

Immigrants who come to the U.S. are a very heterogeneous group with many ethnic, age and educational differences. They all share some aspects of resettlement and acculturation, but they also react differently to their new experiences and environment.

Starting a new life in an American community means many things. For some this may be a fulfillment of a long held dream, while others are still experiencing feelings of loss stemming from their separation from family, friends, jobs, community and homeland. They must adapt to a totally new culture with different values, new ways of doing things and first and foremost a new language. This is a difficult and gradual process. The JCC has worked within the immigrant community for many years to assist this population with the variety of issues they encounter, especially by offering ESL classes.

Immigrants must deal with redefining their concept of self-worth. Many immigrants held positions of responsibility in their native countries. Much of their personal identity and self esteem was tied to the social status of their profession. All need time to improve language skills before they can work. By acquiring these skills, students can build strong self-esteem and ultimately become self-sufficient by obtaining employment.

Many immigrants come to this country with their children. For the latter, the acquisition of language is much easier than the former. For adults, there is a desire to have the ability to communicate in English in order to understand a new frame of reference for all aspects of daily living. This includes the ability to communicate with medical providers, teachers and to navigate the school system.

In conclusion, ESL classes are an important component of adult immigrant's assimilation into American life. We turn to you, our public officials, asking for assistance in continuing these funds so that we may continue to meet the needs of our Staten Island immigrant population.

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UJA Federation
of New York

Update on Naturalization Changes Relevant Statistics

The latest news reports about current USCIS proposals state that **the cost for applying for Citizenship including fingerprinting fees will increase from \$400 to \$675 as of June 1.**¹ This \$275 price increase will come much sooner than the proposed changes in the 100 civics, government and history test. The present time line calls for the new test to be implemented across the country next spring. Many fear that the new test will make achieving citizenship harder for many applicants. The proposed increase in application fees plus the fear of the new test are partly responsible for a **nationwide 79% increase in the number of people who have filed applications to become citizens over last year.**²

The USCIS branch that serves the **14 counties** in southern New York State including **New York City** adjudicated 95,357 applications for citizenship in 2006. Included in the 52,705 who were granted citizenship are applicants who had military and disability waivers. **The major reason the remaining 42,652 did not achieve citizenship was their lack of English skills.**

Statistics from the Pew Hispanic Center³ indicate that:

1. **8.5 million immigrants were eligible to become citizens in 2005**
 - a. 2005 statistics for U.S. residents: 12,361,000 naturalized
 - a. 8,482,000 eligible to naturalize
 - b. 2,758,000 soon-to-be eligible
 - b. 2005 statistics for NYS residents: 1,937,000 naturalized
 - a. 935,000 eligible to naturalize
 - b. 361,000 soon-to-be eligible
2. **Those with less education appear to be less likely to be citizens.**

38% of the legal permanent residents ages 25 to 64 who are eligible to become citizens did **not graduate** from high school compared to only 15% of the foreign-born citizens.
Most college educated eligible immigrants ages 25-64 have become citizens. Most immigrants in the same age category who did not complete high school did not become citizens.
3. In 2005 there were 12.8 million naturalized citizens in the United State. Nationally, the number of legal permanent residents who become citizens each year has been about 600,000 to 700,000 for the last few years.
4. Statistics about adult immigrants who are **eligible to become citizens:**
 - a. **72% have limited English skills.**
 - b. **Regardless of county of origin, adult immigrants are more likely to be naturalized if they speak English well.**
 - c. **88% of the men and 44% of the women are currently working.**
 - d. 36% have been in this country 20 years or more.
5. An additional 2.8 million people will soon be eligible but are too young or recently arrived to do so now.
6. **Legal permanent residents and those who will soon become eligible to become citizens are more likely to be poor than those who have become citizens.**

24% of the legal permanent residents and 30% of those soon to be eligible are below the poverty line compared to 14% of the naturalized citizens.

¹"Legal Immigrants seek American Citizenship in Surging Numbers: Nationwide, applications have increased 79 Percent, according to US Citizenship and Immigration Services" by Daniel B. Wood, staff writer of the Christian Science Monitor, March 26, 2007.

²"Citizenship Requests Soar Before Big Changes," by Anna Gorman and Jennifer Delson, staff writers for the LA Times, February 25, 2007.

³"Growing Share of Immigrants Choosing Naturalization" a report by Jeffrey S. Passel a Senior Associate, Pew Hispanic Trust which is a nonpartisan research organization supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts, March 28, 2007.

My name is Sofia Cordero. I am the Case Manager at the Adult Education Program at Project Reach Youth or PRY. I was an ESL student at PRY. In 1997 I became a citizen. Citizenship changed my life for me and for my family. Now I can help other people who are like me

The Center for an Urban Future report, "Lost in Translation" tells about the need for ESOL classes. I want to talk about the need for a special type of ESOL class---ESL Citizenship classes in New York City. I don't have to talk about how citizenship can change a person's life. You know that. I want to talk about the problem of getting into citizenship class in New York .

The immigrant community in the United States is facing major changes in the Naturalization process. We have heard that the price to apply for Citizenship is going up 69% in June and right now a new test is being piloted which will be much more challenging for everyone especially non-native English speakers like myself.

The news reports about current USCIS proposals state that the cost for applying for Citizenship including fingerprinting fees will increase from \$400 to \$675 as of June 1. This \$275 price increase will be very difficult for low income immigrants to afford. This will be really hard for families where there is more than one adult immigrant.

In 2005, almost 8 ½ million U.S residents were eligible to become citizens. 935,000 of them were New Yorkers. For the area that serves the 14 counties in southern New York State including New York City 95,357 Citizenship applications were adjudicated in 2006. 52,705 were granted citizenship but some of these had military and disability waivers. That leaves 42,652 applicants who did not achieve citizenship. The biggest reason the 42,652 failed was that they lacked English skills. That is not surprising because nationally 72% of adult immigrants who are eligible to become citizens have limited English skills. The simple truth is that regardless of country of origin, adult immigrants are more likely to be naturalized if they speak English well.

And many people fear that the new test will make becoming citizenship even harder than it is now. The proposed increase in application fees plus the fear of the new test are partly responsible for a nationwide 79% increase in the number of people who filed applications in January, February and March of 2007 compared to last year.

If current trends continue, tens of thousands of immigrants from New York City and surrounding areas who want to become citizens will fail the test this year after paying hundreds of dollars in fees. Next year there maybe many more failures than last year and many will have paid the higher fee.

Project Reach Youth has been helping working families holistically for 20 years and citizenship has been a major part of our program. Since 1997 our CSBG funded Citizenship program has helped thousands of students. Last year PRY helped 163 students pass the test within a 12 month period. Even after the 12 months, more of our students keep passing the test. 93% of the PRY students who took the test passed in that 12 month period. Yet there weren't enough Citizenship classes then. Our students came from 31 different zip codes in Brooklyn and from 9 in other Boroughs. There weren't enough classes where

they lived. But still the ESL/Citizenship CSBG stream was cut out. Since January we have had a small Citizenship program with IOI funding. Without advertising, our classes are overflowing and we still have a waiting list of over 100 students. More people call daily. And the shortage of citizenship classes is going to get worse.

We urgently need funding for citizenship classes starting in July when our IOI runs out and so will other programs. There will be an even larger rush of new students who will urgently call for help than last year. Remember the financial stakes for them will be even higher.

State Education and NYCALI funding is based on programs showing student progress in going up educational levels. Yes, citizenship students want to learn English but they want to learn it for the purpose of passing the citizenship test. The purpose is citizenship. When the goal of citizenship is reached for one student PRY wants to be able to put another in his seat. Then we will be able to help the maximum number of students our funding allows. We need a funding source that understands that.

Please give us and other citizenship programs a stable, common sense source of funding to help these legal residents to achieve the goal of citizenship.

May 4th 2007

FOR THE RECORD

City Council Immigration and Civil Rights Committee Hearing

My name is Aleksandra Antonovskaya. I am a Director of Immigrant Services at the Kings Bay YM-YWHA (Kings Bay Y) Jewish Community Center. Kings Bay YM-YWHA is located in the South Brooklyn and serves Sheepshead Bay, Marine Park, Garritson Beach, Bergen Beach and Midwood areas. These areas are a home to large numbers of the immigrants from the Former Soviet Union and China. Many of these people come to Kings Bay Y throughout the year for a variety of services such as social services, children's programs, programs for adults, seniors and disabled, cultural programs and others.

One of the most popular programs among the immigrant groups is ESL and Citizenship Preparation Program. Adults and Seniors recently arrived and those who have been in the country for number of years all seek to learn and improve their English language skills. They realize that English language proficiency is the key to successful adaptation in their new country. Adults need to learn the language to be able to join the professional work force. Seniors want to learn the language to maintain their independence and social life. All understand that they need to speak and understand English in order to be able to communicate with the younger generation of children and teens who quickly loose their native language and prefer speaking English only.

Further, all the immigrants need to go through the Naturalization Process and pass the citizenship exam in order to become US Citizens. It is extremely important for all immigrants to become American Citizens. For people collecting government benefits such as SSI and Medicare, it is absolutely necessary to become citizens. If immigrants who collect SSI do not become citizens after 7 years since the arrival to the US, they loose their benefits which are their only source of income.

Kings Bay Y ESL/Civics program currently has 350 students. We offer three levels of study: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Our students are very eager to learn and are hard working students. However, many especially elderly are having difficult time learning a new

language. Many choose to go through same level a few times before they are ready to move on to the next one. Most of the students complete one level by the end of the program year and then come back next year to continue the study. We have many students who have been with us for a few years and demonstrate real progress. It brings such a joy to see people become more confident, independent and comfortable in their new country with the ability to communicate and understand their surrounding. It is a great pleasure to witness immigrants become citizens and experience a great sense of accomplishment. We take great pride in our students and feel privileged to provide this great service to our community. ESL/ Civics courses are crucial program for our community members. It is always completely utilized and often we are forced to put people on the waiting list because the demand for this program is higher than our capacity

On behalf of my students, I thank City Council for providing resources for this great initiative. I plead to all of you to continue and expand this initiative in the future so that we can help many more immigrants to become American citizens and reach the American dream.

COJO of Flatbush

1550 Coney Island Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11230

FOR THE RECORD

ESOL Program

For almost a decade the ESOL program at COJO of Flatbush has offered free English classes to adults who are native speakers of foreign languages and have limited or no English language skills. Dedicated professional instructors help hundreds of new immigrants and long-time residents obtain greater proficiency in English as well as better understanding of American Government and Civics.

Our student body is very diverse representing individuals from across ethnic, religious, and cultural spectrum, as well as different age groups. Students learn effective communication skills, become familiar with local policies, educational and social programs, and acquire language skills necessary to obtain the GED diplomas, pursue academic degrees in colleges and/or universities, and enter training programs to secure stable employment.

COJO of Flatbush' ESOL program is unique in offering morning and afternoon classes, which make it attractive and easily accessible to families with school age children and seniors of retirement age. The agency is constantly reaching out to the local communities attracting individuals who could benefit from the ESOL program, improve their lives in the United States, and realize the American Dream of building a better future for their families on America's shores.

The demand for our ESOL program continues unabated. The residents of the Brooklyn communities we serve have expressed and on-goingly express a great interest in joining our ESOL & Civics classes. This indicates to our agency that there is a great need for this type of English Language Education service in our Greater Flatbush/ Midwood community. To many of our clients, this is an indispensable program, which helps them enormously to find employment, continue their education, and helps them to survive.