



Testimony of Brady Hamed of the Mayor's Office of Operations

Committee on Governmental Operations

June 8, 2021 | 12:30pm

Good afternoon, Speaker Corey Johnson, Chairman Fernando Cabrera, and members of the Governmental Operations Committees, and Council Members Ydanis Rodriguez and Oswald Feliz for co-sponsoring this legislation. Thank you for inviting us to appear before you today to discuss Community and Ethnic Media and Introduction 2313. My name is Brady Hamed and I am the Deputy Director of Accountability and Administration for the Mayor's Office of Operations. I'd also like to recognize Jose Bayona, Director of Community and Ethnic Media at the Mayor's Press Office, for his leadership and organizing role on this important effort.

On May 22, 2019, Mayor Bill de Blasio signed Executive Order 47: Strengthening our Commitment to Community and Ethnic Media. This Executive Order directs all City agencies, the NYC Department of Education, NYC Health + Hospitals, and the New York City Housing Authority to spend at least 50 percent of their eligible individual annual print and digital advertising budgets with the City's community and ethnic media outlets starting in Fiscal 2020. This commitment to community and ethnic media advertising spending is important not only to

amplify City services to communities and neighborhoods that may have limited English proficiency or otherwise may be unaware of City government programs, but also to support New York City's small businesses and community and ethnic media news outlets – an effort that has been particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is a broad landscape of City agencies, offices, and partners that are instrumental in placing advertisements in community and ethnic media outlets citywide.

- Jose Bayona, Director of Community and Ethnic Media for the Mayor's Press Office, serves in a leadership role for this work. This role is foundational as a primary liaison with community and ethnic media outlet partners and assisting agencies in developing advertising campaigns. This role is also important in maintaining the Community and Ethnic Media directory, posted public on the City's websites.
- The Mayor's Office of Operations is tasked with implementing the requirements of Executive Order 47. The Office of Operations is focused on the performance management aspect of the City agencies' media advertising spending, working with the Mayor's Office of Data Analytics on analyzing the relevant data, issuing guidance documents, and hosting trainings with agencies to support their compliance with the Executive Order, collecting data in a quarterly cadence, and checking in with agencies to support them in meeting the 50 percent advertising spending target. The Office of Operations also reviews and approves agency request for exemptions, petitions and waivers on certain requirements

as outlined in the Executive Order. Additionally, the Office of Operations reports on the data publicly each fiscal year.

- The Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) hosts a backdrop contract with two advertising firms, Miller and Graystone. These firms are provided with training and guidance on the requirements of Executive Order 47; they help agencies place advertisements in community and ethnic media outlets and also regularly report advertising spending data to the Office of Operations.
- Finally, each agency has its own network of marketing and fiscal contacts that work to reach the 50 percent advertising spending target for the agency.

For the purposes of Executive Order 47, Community and Ethnic Media outlets are defined as a print or digital outlet that is created for the communities of people based on native language, race, color, gender, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability or immigrant status; targets a discrete neighborhood, or geographic region, or populations that may or may not typically receive information from mainstream publications because of their exclusive use of foreign language; or falls within specifically tailored subject matter. To calculate agencies spending toward the 50 percent advertising spend goal, the Office of Operations collects all advertising spending data, both for mainstream and community and ethnic media print and digital outlets. Collecting the full universe of print and digital advertising spend allows us to calculate how each agency is meeting the 50 percent community and ethnic media advertising spend goal. At this

time, other forms of media including social media, broadcast media like TV and radio, mobile applications unaffiliated with a print and digital outlet, job boards, professional associations or networks, bus shelter ads, and other types of media are outside the scope of the Executive Order and are therefore excluded from the calculations.

The Office of Operations regularly collects data on individual advertisement placements – both from agencies and directly from Miller and Graystone, the advertising firms mentioned previously. Operations collects all advertisement data on a quarterly basis in order to perform regular benchmarking with agencies throughout the year in an effort to meet the 50 percent advertising spending targets. Throughout the fiscal year, the Director of Community and Ethnic Media and the Office of Operations partner to maintain the Community and Ethnic Media directory and work with agencies to reach a broad network of the outlets.

There is also a regular process for communicating with agencies to review annual waivers for agencies with a negligible advertising spend, petitions for agencies to request for spending with an outlet that would typically be out of scope from compliance calculations to count positively toward community and ethnic media spending, and exemptions for a request for spend that typically counts negatively for compliance to be excluded from compliance calculations entirely, generally requested if the agency places ads in a mainstream outlet in order to meet other legal

requirements. At the end of the fiscal year, Operations compiles this data and publishes it on its website and on the Open Data Portal.

Operations also has a partnership in place with the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism CUNY Foundation on behalf of the Center for Community Media at CUNY to further support the joint commitment to community and ethnic media. In addition to the 2020 summary [report](#) published by the CUNY Center for Community Media, which utilizes data provided by Operations, the City also works with the CUNY Center for Community Media to ensure lines of communication are open between outlets and key City agency marketing and press staff.

The City has demonstrated strong progress in fulfilling the goals of Executive Order 47 and advertising City services to a diverse group of communities. In Fiscal 2020, the first full fiscal year of the Executive Order, the City saw substantial spending on community and ethnic media outlets. Thirty-five (35) of out of 40 eligible agencies, or 88 percent of agencies, met the 50 percent spending threshold. Citywide, \$9.9M out of the \$11.8M eligible advertising spending was spent on community and ethnic media outlets. This represented 84% of spending, far outpacing the stated 50 percent goal. Compliance, at both an individual agency and at citywide levels, far surpassed our targets. The City was also able to communicate its programs and services with individuals who read community and ethnic media outlets and support those outlets in the process. This targeted communication was particularly important during the

COVID-19 pandemic, as many community-based outlets served as key news sources for communities vulnerable to COVID-19. Moreover, in Fiscal 2020, the City placed ads with 50 outlets for the first time ever, and increased advertising placements with more than 185 outlets. The City is committed to continuing this important push in future fiscal years.

The Mayor's Office of Operations and the City are largely supportive of Introduction 2313 to create an Office of Ethnic and Community Media, which aligns with the values, goals and accomplishments of the de Blasio Administration in advertising critical City services to a diverse landscape of communities including those with limited English proficiency.

I'd like to close by thanking our external partners at the CUNY Center for Community Media for their guidance and support on this important initiative, and by thanking you, Council Members, for your leadership on this topic and hearing our testimony today.

**Testimony of Margery Perlmutter, Chair of the Board of Standards and Appeals
New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations
June 8, 2021**

Good morning, Chair Cabrera and members of the Governmental Operations Committee. I am Margery Perlmutter, Chair of the New York City Board of Standards and Appeals. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We support Introduction Number 2257, which would require the Board to record, in the Office of the City Register or the Richmond County Clerk's office, notice of each of its orders, requirements, decisions, determinations, resolutions, or restrictive declarations. First I would like to provide a brief background on the Board of Standards and Appeals as well as the reasons for our support, and then take questions.

Since 1916, the Board has worked to administer zoning, building, and housing regulations in a fair and just manner to protect the City's interest in safeguarding the general welfare while balancing private property interests. In this role, the Board has frequently been called a "relief valve"—a protector of the City's regulations from constitutional challenge and a guardian of the urban fabric.

The Board is an independent agency that consists of five full-time commissioners with select skill sets—including experience in architecture, urban planning, and engineering—supported by a staff of 16 employees. Using their technical expertise and independent judgment, each commissioner scrutinizes every land-use application with the utmost of care. Commissioners' review frequently involves analyzing intricate construction documents, financial statements, testimony from other government agencies, and site conditions gleaned through visits to the properties and neighborhoods at issue.

The Board's staff of 18 employees currently manages 105 years of archives and pending applications currently in review. Under the direction of the Board's executive director and deputy director, these applications are reviewed by four project managers and one director of environmental review.

Second, as I mentioned, we support Introduction Number 2257. Variances, special permits, and other applications granted by the Board of Standards and Appeals employ safeguards and conditions to ensure that its decisions minimize any potential adverse effects on surrounding communities. The Board's waivers of zoning and other regulations and conditions of approval are delineated in a set of Board-approved architectural plans and in a written resolution, copies of which are retained by the applicant, forwarded to the Department of Buildings and maintained in the Board's archives. However, the Board has seen numerous occasions where the property owner, neighbors and government agencies are unaware that a property is subject to Board jurisdiction. Frequently, a new owner will learn for the first time in perhaps a decade or more that the property is subject to a variance or a special permit upon receiving a violation for a zoning non-compliance because due diligence searches prior to purchasing did not flag these property restrictions. Accordingly, the Board should record its resolutions against the properties they affect in the Office of the City Register or the Richmond County Clerk to ensure that they become part of the title search process and to provide clarity to the public at large. This modest operational modification would greatly benefit property owners subject to Board jurisdiction—the vast majority of which are small businesses, homeowners, and nonprofit organizations—but would also help ensure that the Board's safeguards and conditions are carried out, lowering enforcement costs and benefitting communities.

I am happy to take any questions and look forward to hearing ideas about improving the Board's processes. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony of Javier Castaño, QueensLatino's founder and director on Intro 2313 for the creation of the NYC Mayor Office of Ethnic and Community Media (June 8th, 2021)

New York City Council / Committee on Governmental Operations:

Since I arrived in New York City 37 years ago, I have always worked as a reporter and photographer of news events. I have been editor in chief of El Diario La Prensa, and Hoy Nueva York. I have a Master's degree in Journalism from Columbia University. I have written extensively about immigration, housing, employment, education, culture and crime.

I know New York very well, and I recognize the importance of the ethnic media in a city as diverse as this. But I don't have to tell you this fact. I am here testifying because the ethnic media is being used and abused for too long.

The first time I testified at the New York City Council was on January 28, 2016. Councilman Carlos Menchaca called representatives of the ethnic media to testify about El Diario La Prensa going down the drain. At that time, we heard many promises, but nothing happened to benefit the ethnic media and the Latino press.

On December 11, 2014 and February 16, 2016 Melissa Mark-Viverito, then president of the City Council, brought members of the ethnic media to City Hall and promised to help us with money and resources. But again, nothing happened.

Everything started to change on May 22nd, 2019 when Mayor Bill de Blasio signed Executive Order 47 to benefit the ethnic media. Each New York City agency has to give at least 50% of the advertising budget to print and online ethnic media. During these times of big corporations, anti-immigrant laws, and pandemic, this money is keeping the ethnic media alive and thriving. The input of Jose Bayona as Director of Community & Ethnic Media at the Mayor Office has been the key of this initiative.

And now Corey Johnson, president of the City Council, Eric Adams, Brooklyn Borough President, councilmen Ydanis Rodríguez and Oswald Felix want to take this initiative to a higher level. An Executive Order can be killed by the new Mayor. This is why they want to create a New York City agency to connect and give advertising dollars to the ethnic media.

I welcome this initiative because it is the first in the United States. It will be an example for other cities to emulate. I support this initiative because it will help the bottom line of the ethnic media. I support this initiative because democracy and freedom of information will benefit. The government has given media corporations big money for too long, and they seldom reached out to our communities.

This New York City agency for the ethnic media will help balance the inequalities in this city. It will help solidify democracy in an era that we are talking about news deserts, digital divide, the lack of civic engagement, and low voting participation.

As director of QueensLatino these are the issues that we pay attention to on our platform.

This is an initiative of New York City, and no political party or educational institution as CUNY should take credit for it. This initiative is not for publications or platforms based outside of New York City.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

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Javier Castaño

Director | **QueensLatino** | (646) 246-1960

**Written testimony, World Journal,
June 8, 2021**

Honorable Speaker and Chairperson:

Thank for providing this rare opportunity to present to you in our endeavor and hardship of today ethnic press publishing situation in this great city of New York we call home.

World Journal was founded in February 1976 at White Street, Chinatown, New York City. We moved to Flushing, Queens in 1981, and finally in Whitestone, Queens in June 1989. We have witnessed the changing of demography of Chinese Americans communities throughout the city and the country. And we have delivered consistently news service to our readers from all over the world who speak and read Chinese. Today, World Journal published in print and online, as well as many social platforms, it is the most respected and trustworthy Chinese news media.

The Chinese community is made up of people from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia Diasporas. We work as a bridge between many city agencies and Chinese communities in the past 46 years. The essential service and messages provided by city various agencies are very important to the daily life and public safety.

During the pandemic, news media plays essential role in keeping public aware of lockdowns, masking, social distance and vaccination. World Journal provides around the clock news and information regarding the pandemic, and yet we are struggling while we play our role.

Even before the pandemic, for the last two decades, big tech companies dominate news organization's advertising revenue; the combined effects put the ethnic media in a very disadvantage position. Google and Facebook combined took 60-70% of the entire advertisement revenue. The rest (30-40%) are shared by tens thousands of media, big and small. Including giants like the NYT, WSJ, etc. mid-small media are struggling...

The ethnic media in general, has limited resources to invest and to upgrade new social media technologies. It becomes very hard to keep up and compete with technology companies. In the case of World Journal in particular, we have seen advertisement revenue decreased 15-20% year over year. Then, the pandemic impacts cost us 50% of the advertisement revenue, and retired over half of our employees. We still are in recovery mode.

In our estimation, the pandemic has knocked 50% or more local Chinese media so far. The ethnic media in general are supported by local small business. Today, small business is facing so much challenges and uncertainty after pandemic, so as well as ethnic press.

In this crucial moment of post pandemic, Democracy needs free press, the New York City needs diverse free press, and we need help.

Thank you very much.

**World Journal
New York**

From Sing Tao Daily

I am Rick Ho, General Manager of Sing Tao Daily.

Sing Tao is the largest Chinese media in New York founded in 1965. We have been serving Chinese New Yorkers for more than 54 years. We have our own office building in Manhattan and our own printing plant in Brooklyn for long term service. Sing Tao Newspaper's daily circulation is about 50,000-60,000 and we have more than 80,000 digital audiences. Sing Tao is very popular and important to Chinese New Yorkers but we had been disregarded by the Government agencies for decades until executive order 47 was signed by the Mayor.

There are more than 700,000 Chinese New Yorker living in NYC. Most of them are limited English proficiency who totally depend on Chinese media to get news and information. They were unaware of city government policies and programs. They had been disregarded, ignored and underserved until executive order 47 was signed by the Mayor.

Since executive order 47 was signed by the Mayor. Sing Tao newspaper and Sing Tao website have received many more ad insertion orders. The results are extremely significant. Most Chinese are much better informed. By reading the in language ads, they know the importance of wearing mask, taking test for covid-19 and getting antivirus injections. They learnt about rank choice voting and be more willing to vote. For the first time, they feel that the city government care about Chinese New Yorkers. They have stronger sense of belongings.

However, there are still lots of info they are eager to learn about, such as how to apply for public housing, how to get mental health service, how to deal with anti Asian hate crime. I hope the city agencies will display more in language ad in Chinese media so that this long time underserved community can get the info and the service they are entitle to, just like all other New Yorkers.

Sing Tao Daily and our digital media outlets, pay tens of thousands city tax every year and have been serving such a large group of New Yorkers for decades, is entitled to get our fair share of the ad budget from the City Government, like other English media.