

May 25, 2022

The Honorable Eric Adams, Mayor  
The City of New York  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Chancellor David C. Banks  
New York City Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

**Dear Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks,**

The Language Access and Immigrant Family Communication Working Group, a coalition of advocates and organizations from across New York City, is writing to **request that the City baseline a \$6 million investment for the New York City Department of Education's (DOE) language access and parent-facing communication infrastructure in the upcoming Fiscal Year 2023 budget.**

The DOE has historically not met their obligation to provide effective language assistance services to Limited English Proficient (LEP) families as outlined in Chancellor's Regulation A-663, both before and throughout the pandemic. During the pandemic, the DOE did not consistently communicate with immigrant and LEP families in their home language and via accessible forms of communication that do not rely on internet access, often leaving families in the dark about important updates and policy changes. Given these failures, we are grateful that the City invested \$4 million in the DOE this school year to implement the New York Immigration Coalition's Communications Plan and develop a linguistically responsive communications infrastructure and marketing strategies to meaningfully engage immigrant and LEP communities. However, this funding will expire in June 2022 and will be limited in reach.

Although the Mayor's Executive Budget includes \$7 million in federal American Rescue Plan funding to increase staff for the DOE's Translation and Interpretation Unit, the Executive Budget does not extend the funding allocated in Fiscal Year 2022 for broader immigrant family communications. **The City should invest and baseline \$6 million in Fiscal Year 2023 to establish a permanent, central system for immigrant family communications.**

The Fiscal Year 2022 funding has provided the unique opportunity for the DOE to:

- Draft implementation plans for the \$4M allocation on language access;
- Identify metrics and outcomes for effective partnerships with immigrant-serving community based organizations (CBOs);
- Identify effective community engagement strategies for immigrant communities;
- Facilitate opportunities for CBOs to uplift knowledge and information gaps at the community level;

- Consult with immigrant advocates to outline best practices for immigrant CBO partnerships and grant disbursement;
- Identify an interpretation training for bilingual school based staff with Southern California School of Interpretation;
- Roll out the first city-wide campaign to translate Special Education documents;
- Identify and expand access to useful central messaging tools including “Everbridge” and “Talking Points” to engage families;
- Identify the need for multilingual content for ParentUniversity;
- Co-create with advocates a creative brief with culturally responsive framing for immigrants on how to access DOE-provided mental health supports;
- Expand ImmSchools’ Equip.Learn.Launch Institute and incorporate new workshops.

The DOE has collaborated on implementation in consultation with immigrant-led CBOs, parent leaders, and other community stakeholders. To formalize this partnership, the Language Access and Immigrant Family Communication Working Group was formed and has met weekly since August 2021. Our partnership has ensured the DOE advances language access practices that properly meet the needs of immigrant and LEP families with a community-informed lens.

**Ongoing Need for Funding:**

Despite the impact and progress made as a result of this funding, the one-time, \$4M payment had several limitations. Firstly, language barriers for newcomer immigrants and LEP families will always exist, and one-time funding streams fail to produce sustainable improvements that would cultivate lasting and equitable access for these families. Secondly, the late allocation of these one-time funds hindered the DOE’s capacity to distribute the CBO-designated portion, roll out multiple marketing campaigns, and maximize impact to families. Finally, this limited funding opportunity made it impossible to hire the professionals needed for the DOE to project manage ongoing campaigns that center immigrant family engagement. A larger and more consistent investment will cover DOE staff salaries, support sustainable community-based partnerships, and ultimately ensure immigrant and LEP students and families are no longer an afterthought in DOE communications.

**We ask the City to continue to advance improvements in the DOE’s language access infrastructure by investing \$6M and baselining this funding stream.** This investment will ensure that the DOE can consistently hire the staff and invest in the training, campaigns, mailers, and other tools that will be needed to fully engage immigrant youth and families. New York City has a unique opportunity to continue building this infrastructure for language access and parent-facing communication to last beyond this year, all with community input. The co-creative process of collecting best practices and building new multilingual communications infrastructure takes time and is not always easy. However, it is resulting in a powerful partnership that has already made critical strides in expanding language access for families, and it will yield long-term impact. Thus, we urge you to ensure this funding is more consistent, becoming an expected baseline funding stream that

equips us with the time and resources necessary to do this vital work in communities and for our students.

Thank you for your consideration and support,

**The Language Access and Immigrant Family Communication Working Group Members:**

Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)

Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY (CIDNY)

Chinese Progressive Association

Chinese-American Planning Council

Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)

Community Inclusion & Development Alliance (CIDA)

Immigrant Social Services, Inc. (ISS)

ImmSchools

Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

Literacy Assistance Center

Literacy Partners

Metropolitan Parent Center, Sinergia Inc

New York Immigration Coalition

Next100

Women's Empowerment Coalition of NYC

**Partnering Sign-Ons:**

Cabrini Immigrant Services of NYC, Inc.

Fifth Avenue Committee, Inc.

New York Appleseed

South Bronx Rising Together

Volunteers of Legal Service