

CC: Deputy Mayor J. Philip Thompson; Deputy Mayor Vicki Been; Commissioner of Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Bitta Mostofi; City Council Speaker Corey Johnson

April 16, 2020

Dear Mayor De Blasio,

We write to you on behalf of New Yorkers either underserved by or outright excluded from city, state, and federal COVID-19 benefits: undocumented Americans, cash economy workers, immigrant small business owners, and low-income residents.¹ While the federal stimulus package may be a welcome respite for many nationwide, it is inadequate for a city like New York where undocumented workers and immigrant small business owners play a critical role on the front lines of the response to the pandemic.

New York City is not living up to its self-declared status as a sanctuary city. Immigrants, regardless of their legal status, are disproportionately leading the response to the pandemic, keeping not just our city, but our country afloat in arenas such as public health, construction, food preparation and delivery, and homecare. Your administration has recognized undocumented residents as essential to the continued well-being of our city, while simultaneously treating them as disposable by neglecting to ensure they have access to the same basic protections and cash assistance as their documented neighbors. Meanwhile, cities across the US, including Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and Chicago have taken executive action to ensure refugee and immigrant communities are secure and supported.

With a national political climate that favors the wealthy and is hostile towards our immigrant brothers and sisters, it is of the utmost importance that New York City lead by example and ensure that all of our residents receive adequate support.

Ensure All Taxpaying New Yorkers Receive Aid

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), passed on March 27th, completely excludes over one million undocumented New Yorkers, mixed-status families and cash economy workers², including those who pay taxes using Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITIN)³. We ask that New York City distribute funds more equitably to reach undocumented New Yorkers by:

- Creating a fund for individual payments to New Yorkers excluded from the federal stimulus package in amounts that match those set by the CARES Act, following the eligibility requirements set for the IDNYC application, and
- Expanding State unemployment benefits to include all workers, including those who are paid in cash and/or pay taxes using an ITIN.

Supplement Relief for the Most Vulnerable New Yorkers

Low-income New Yorkers are already affected disproportionately by this crisis, and the limited reach of the federal stimulus funds will not meet their needs,⁴ especially when the median asking rent as of June 2019 was \$3,300 for a 2-bedroom apartment - far greater than the anticipated \$1,200 stimulus checks.⁵



We ask that New York City expand benefits to help the most vulnerable New Yorkers weather these challenges by:

- Providing additional relief to low- and moderate-income New York residents via additional payments to those who earn less than 81% of AMI for the duration of the public health crisis, and
- Making these payments accessible to all New Yorkers regardless of their immigration status or tax payment status.

Assure Immigrant Small Business Resilience

Small businesses are the cornerstones of our communities and some of our constituents are reporting record income losses of up to 100%. Many fear they will be unable to reopen after the crisis. Although small business loans and grants exist, in practice we have found that many immigrant small business owners and sole proprietors are ultimately ineligible due to monolingual English application documents, extensive documentation required, and extensive eligibility criteria.

Immigrant-owned small businesses comprise 48% of New York City's roughly 220,000 small businesses. Immigrants employ nearly half a million New Yorkers and contribute \$195 billion to the city's gross domestic product (GDP) annually.⁶ In order to ensure that they can continue these contributions, we ask for the creation of a NYC Immigrant Small Business Grant, with the following parameters of eligibility:

- Ensure that eligibility is not dependent on commercial rent payments, utility bills or payroll;
- Confirm that no immigration status reporting is required, either for employer or employee;
- Allow for adequate documentation to include that which is suitable for cash transaction reporting, such as reporting daily sales on written ledgers, or end of day counts;
- Ensure all promotional and application materials are in multiple languages; and
- Allow for a mobile food vending license or permit, general merchandise license, tickets received for vending, or proof of quarterly sales tax filings to be sufficient proof of sole proprietorship.

Mayor De Blasio, New Yorkers are depending on you to ensure we emerge successful and resilient from this devastating public and financial health crisis. Your immediate action is needed.

Sincerely,

United for Small Business NYC

- Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development
- Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A
- Chhaya Community Development Corporation
- Cooper Square Committee
- The Municipal Art Society of New York
- NYC Artist Coalition
- NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives
- Street Vendor Project, Urban Justice Center
- Volunteers of Legal Service
- TakeRoot Justice

Adhikaar

- Asian American Federation
- CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities
- Chinese-American Planning Council
- Damayan Migrant Workers Association
- Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM)
- Families for Freedom
- Human Rights Watch
- Immigration Advocates Network
- ImmSchools
- Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ)
- Laundry Workers Center
- New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE)
- New York Communities for Change
- New York State Youth Leadership Council
- UnLocal, Inc.
- Workers Justice Project (WJP)



1. “Immigration & COVID-19 - New American Economy Research Fund.” Accessed March 31, 2020. <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/immigration-and-covid-19/?emci=0ebd83c0-746f-ea11-a94c-00155d03b1e8&emdi=942b7cab-986f-ea11-a94c-00155d03b1e8&ceid=398150>.
2. “State of Our Immigrant City: MOIA Annual Report for Calendar Year 2018,” 2018, 60. https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/immigrants/downloads/pdf/moia_annual_report%202019_final.pdf.
3. Hackman, Michelle. “Some Tax-Paying Immigrants Won’t Get Coronavirus Stimulus Payments.” *Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 2020, sec. Politics. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/some-tax-paying-immigrants-wont-get-coronavirus-stimulus-payments-11585574259>.
4. “Coronavirus Stimulus Package F.A.Q.: Checks, Unemployment and More - The New York Times.” Accessed March 31, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/coronavirus-stimulus-package-questions-answers.html>.
5. Ricciulli, Valeria. “NYC One-Bedroom Rents Hit \$2,980/Month, an All-Time High.” *Curbed NY*, June 3, 2019. <https://ny.curbed.com/2019/6/3/18650949/nyc-rent-prices-zumper-report>.
6. Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development. “The Forgotten Tenants: New York City’s Immigrant Small Business Owners,” March 5, 2019. <https://anhd.org/report/forgotten-tenants-new-york-citys-immigrant-small-business-owners>.