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CITY ANNOUNCES MAJOR EXPANSION OF ACTIONNYC IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES AT NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

City to expand access to legal support at NYC Health + Hospitals locations in Queens, Manhattan and the Bronx

ActionNYC to award 20 fellowships to provide organizing and legal training to community-based organizations that meet New Yorkers where they live, work and learn

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs Nisha Agarwal announced today that ActionNYC, the City’s premier program providing free and secure immigration legal help to immigrant New Yorkers, has launched a \$1.3 million expansion in legal assistance and training capacity for the city’s immigrant communities. This week, in partnership with the New York Legal Assistance Group, ActionNYC opened a new legal screening site at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst, in Queens, which is now accepting appointments. ActionNYC will open an additional site at NYC Health + Hospitals/Gouverneur, in Lower Manhattan, on May 15th and a third ActionNYC site will open at NYC Health + Hospitals/Lincoln, in the Bronx, in the coming weeks. ActionNYC is also granting 20 fellowships for legal and outreach training and technical assistance to community-based organizations across the city. Alongside last week’s announcement of \$16.4 million in new funding for New Yorkers facing deportation and other pressing immigration challenges, this legal services expansion demonstrates the City’s commitment to serving immigrant New Yorkers in need.

These expansions will help ActionNYC and its partners provide additional assistance to immigrant New Yorkers. The added investments will also increase New Yorkers’ access to essential legal and informational resources from community partners they trust, where they live, learn and work.

“We are committed to expanding services for our fellow New Yorkers, especially in the face of the Trump administration’s extreme anti-immigrant policies,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Now, through this partnership between ActionNYC and NYC Health + Hospitals, New Yorkers will have greater access to high-quality legal assistance and healthcare in their communities. At the same time, organizing and legal fellowships will support organizations with strong ties to vulnerable immigrant communities to more effectively engage and serve these groups.

ActionNYC is yet another way we welcome immigrant communities whose contributions help make this the greatest city in the world.”

“I couldn’t be prouder of the work ActionNYC is doing to get legal assistance to more and more immigrant communities across the city, and these expansions will build on our great track record,” said **Commissioner Nisha Agarwal of the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs**. “Expanding our sites in partnership with NYC Health + Hospitals makes our immigrant communities stronger and healthier. Helping immigrant-focused community organizations get the mentorship and technical training they need to be more effective is a boon to the whole city. Immigrants are a great source of vitality to New York City and ActionNYC will be there with the legal assistance our communities need.”

“Uncertainty and fear should not stop immigrant New Yorkers from seeking out vital services like medical care,” said **Commissioner Steven Banks of the Department of Social Services**. “New York City has made an unprecedented commitment to provide legal assistance to those who need it and we are proud to be a part of this effort to expand these services for immigrants to more communities and hospitals where they are desperately needed.”

“Today, ActionNYC takes another important step to ensure all New Yorkers have the immigration legal help they need and that it is readily accessible,” said **Dr. Herminia Palacio, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services**. “ActionNYC’s partnership with NYC Health + Hospitals will leverage City resources to meet the health and legal needs of some of our most vulnerable citizens.”

“Through our experience with ActionNYC at our hospitals and long-term care facilities in our public health system, as well as the series of Immigrant Health Care Rights forums we’ve hosted since March around the city, we know that these legal services meet an important need,” said **Stanley Brezenoff, interim President and Chief Executive Officer of NYC Health + Hospitals**. “We are pleased to partner with the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs and the New York Legal Assistance Group on this significant expansion of ActionNYC, which will make a real difference in the lives of some of our most vulnerable New Yorkers.”

The ActionNYC investments amount to approximately \$1.3 million between the two programs: about \$1.1 million for the NYC Health + Hospitals expansion and a quarter million dollars for the capacity-building initiative for community-based organizations.

“Helping immigrants make a new life is one of the grand traditions of America,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “The two program expansions announced today-- for health care representation and for immigration fellowships within community-based organizations-- help put that tradition of support into practice in our city at a crucial time.”

“The ActionNYC initiative underscores New York City’s commitment to protecting all New Yorkers,” said **Queens Borough President Melinda Katz**. “The new ActionNYC legal screening site at NYC Health + Hospitals/Elmhurst will greatly benefit Queens residents, nearly half of whom were born outside the United States. Mayor de Blasio and the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, led by Commissioner Nisha Agarwal, deserve to be commended for ensuring

that immigrant New Yorkers have access to the legal and informational resources they need in these uncertain times.”

“Many thanks to Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Agarwal for launching this major \$1.3 million expansion of the ActionNYC program,” said **State Senator José M. Serrano**. “This important investment will improve access to legal aid and training capacity for the city’s immigrant communities. We must continue to support New York’s immigrant communities and help fight back against unjust deportation and other pressing challenges.”

“I’m elated that our City’s administration is maintaining its long standing commitment to defend the fundamental rights of our immigrant communities by expanding two ActionNYC programs,” said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. “I commend the efforts of Mayor de Blasio, the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, NYC Health + Hospitals and the participating community-based organizations for working together in an effort to fight the harmful immigration policies that the current administration continues to put forth by providing New Yorkers with access to critical legal services.”

“In these troubling times, many immigrants do not seek out necessary services for fear of being picked up by ICE and deported,” said **State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky**. “My office has received several phone calls and office visits from people who worry how the hateful threats coming from the White House will affect them. I am, however, happy to see the City and State of New York standing up for what is right and this newest expansion from the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs will greatly add to what has become a resistance against hate and a commitment to protecting families.”

“As attacks on immigrant rights continue, ensuring access to basic legal services is critical,” said **State Senator Daniel Squadron**. “New York’s commitment to being an inclusive and welcoming place of opportunity must endure. Thank you to the City, Commissioner Agarwal and MOIA, and NYC Health + Hospitals.”

“ActionNYC is meeting the legal needs of immigrant New Yorkers with innovative service delivery locations and support for local organizations. Increasing access to legal aid in trusted health care settings will help people who are traditionally hard to reach,” said **Council Member Menchaca, Chair of the Committee on Immigration**. “ActionNYC fellowships for community-based organizations will build lasting legal know-how in immigrant communities. Together, these expanded forms of support demonstrate New York’s commitment to protecting and supporting immigrants.”

“Thanks to this expansion, many more immigrant families will have access to free quality legal services,” said **Council Member Daniel Dromm**. “I am pleased that a new screening site has been opened in the heart of my district, home to a large and diverse immigrant community. I applaud Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Agarwal for expanding this important initiative and urge my constituents to avail themselves of these services. I will continue to work alongside the administration to build upon this progress.”

“At a time of uncertainty and fear among our immigrant communities, I commend the city for the expansion of the ActionNYC program and its partnership with NYC Health + Hospitals/ Gouverneur and other health centers around the city to provide safe and reliable assistance to the immigrants of lower Manhattan,” said **Council Member Margaret S. Chin**. “I would like to thank Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Agarwal for their hard work on behalf of immigrants across our city.”

“It is great that the City will be expanding legal services in public hospitals, and that Gouverneur Health, a vital provider of health care for immigrants and underserved communities in my district, will have a legal screen site in the near future,” said **Assembly Member Yuh-Line Niou**. “It is critical that we provide access to free legal counsel at public hospital where vulnerable individuals go to seek help. Thank you to the City for pushing for this expansion.”

“New York is a city that welcomes immigrants and celebrates diversity,” said **Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried of Manhattan, Chair of the Assembly Health Committee**. “By expanding immigrants’ access to legal aid in NYC Health + Hospitals facilities and delivering new funding for New Yorkers facing deportation and other immigration challenges, the de Blasio administration is reaffirming this commitment.”

High-quality, affordable health care is a right of all New Yorkers but many vulnerable communities are concerned that their right to access that care is compromised by their immigration status. To that end, ActionNYC is partnering with NYC Health + Hospitals to expand access to free and secure legal immigration help at public hospital sites. ActionNYC currently provides immigration legal screenings and representation to uninsured NYC Health + Hospitals patients in long-term acute and post-acute care settings. This expansion builds on existing work started in 2002 by NYC Health + Hospitals and LegalHealth, a division of the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), that provides weekly half-day legal clinics to patients on-site at their 11 hospitals. This expansion also builds on existing work from ActionNYC’s launch in long-term care settings in November 2016; ActionNYC is currently serving patients at NYC Health + Hospitals/Coler, NYC Health + Hospitals/Carter, NYC Health + Hospitals/Sea View and NYC Health + Hospitals/McKinney.

The newly expanded sites will offer attorneys and navigators from LegalHealth and will provide legal aid for immigrant NYC Health + Hospitals patients and community members four days a week. Interpretation services will be provided as needed and navigators will facilitate connections to other social services, including IDNYC and health insurance options. Alongside MOIA, the Human Resources Administration and the Research Foundation of the City University of New York will fund and oversee the program expansion. These navigation sites will bring ActionNYC into more communities, help alleviate high demand at existing ActionNYC sites across the city, and guide immigrants around barriers to obtaining health insurance.

“NYLAG is proud to expand its partnership with NYC Health + Hospitals and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs to continue providing critical legal services to New York City's immigrants,” said **Beth Goldman, President & Attorney-in-Charge of the New York Legal Assistance Group**. “We thank Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Agarwal, and President

Brezenoff for recognizing the increasing legal needs of immigrants in public hospitals, especially in today's climate of increased fear. The ActionNYC model, which gives immigrants the opportunity to access legal services in their own communities, fits seamlessly with NYLAG's community-based model and the partnership our LegalHealth Division has forged over the last 15 years with NYC public hospitals. Expanded legal assistance will give even more immigrants in H+H facilities the opportunity to embark on a path to citizenship and to enroll in vital health insurance programs.”

The City is committed to reaching all New Yorkers who need immigration legal aid, including communities that have traditionally been more challenging to reach. In that effort, ActionNYC is granting 20 fellowship awards to 17 community-based organizations (CBOs) in order to build organizing and legal capacity at organizations across the city. The goal of these capacity-building fellowships is to invest in these community-based organizations and to meet them where they are and to provide CBOs with the technical and hard skills needed to strengthen their outreach work and/or deepen their immigration legal practices. These organizations are deeply rooted in immigrant neighborhoods and communities, have well-established cultural and linguistic competencies, and have obtained the trust of community members — making them uniquely placed to meet community-specific needs. These immigrant communities include, but are not limited to, recently arrived populations from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.

Starting this week and running through June, fellows will complete a minimum of 40 hours of training, which will include technical assistance, program support and mentorship; this program is being funded through ActionNYC. The Immigrant Justice Corps and the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development’s Center for Neighborhood Leadership will serve as coordinators for the legal and organizing fellowships, respectively. Outreach fellows will also convene 1-2 culturally tailored Know-Your-Rights forums of their own, reaching up to 30-40 community members each.

“Immigrant Justice Corps is proud to play a key role as coordinator of the ActionNYC Legal Capacity Building initiative,” said **Jojo Annobil, Executive Director of Immigrant Justice Corps**. “IJC firmly believes in bringing critical legal services directly into immigrant neighborhoods through trusted community partners. This initiative significantly increases the immigration knowledge and skillset of staff at small community-based organizations through cutting edge training and high quality technical assistance.”

“ANHD is excited to join ActionNYC's efforts and looks forward to providing fellows with hard skills and tools through our Center for Neighborhood Leadership so they can more effectively reach hard-to-reach immigrant communities,” said **Benjamin Dulchin, Executive Director of the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development**.

Below is a full list of awardees by program:

Legal Fellowships:

- African Communities Together
- BronxWorks

- Caribbean Women’s Health Association
- Center for the Integration and Advancement of New Americans
- GMHC
- Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement
- Mercy Center
- MinKwon Center for Community Action
- Sauti Yetu Center for African Women
- Street Vendor Project

Organizing Fellowships:

- Council of Peoples Organization (COPO)
- Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)
- Damayan Migrant Workers Association
- Mixteca Organization
- Masa NY
- Mekong NYC
- MinKwon Center for Community Action
- Sauti Yetu Center for African Women
- Street Vendor Project
- YWCA of Queens

“With the federal government escalating immigration enforcement, the need for immigrant communities to get trustworthy immigration help is greater than ever,” said **Amaha Kassa, Executive Director of African Communities Together**. “But our African immigrant communities often don't know how to get it. The ActionNYC capacity building fellowship will help ACT grow our ability to meet the growing needs of our community.”

“BronxWorks is very honored to have been selected by ActionNYC for participation in the legal services fellowship program,” said **Eileen Torres, Executive Director of BronxWorks**. This will enable us to enhance our capacity to engage hard to reach immigrant populations, including those who may be impacted by HIV/AIDS or other chronic health conditions.”

“As COPO is a ‘one stop shop’ for services in NYC, the ActionNYC initiative will enable us to assist more clients who seek our services,” said **Mohammad Razvi, Chief Executive Officer of the Council of Peoples Organization**. We are proud to join Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs on this innovative approach. We are certain these partnerships will keep all New Yorkers safe and healthy. Everyone should be entitled to seek services in this city – that is what makes New York great!”

“CWAHA has a long history of providing immigration services,” said **Cheryl Hall, Executive Director of Caribbean Women’s Health Association**. “We are excited to join ActionNYC to expand access and provide high quality legal representation to meet the needs of communities throughout New York.”

“GMHC is excited to be an ActionNYC fellowship recipient, especially since we have seen a growing need for immigration legal services since November 2016,” said **Kelsey Louie, Chief Executive Officer of GMHC**. We look forward to working with the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs to provide these vital services to New Yorkers as a means to ending the AIDS epidemic and ensuring the health and safety of our clients. Our immigration work has been a key component of the legal services we’ve provided for over two decades. This fellowship grant will allow us to expand the knowledge base of our staff to better assist clients with their important immigration needs.”

“Riis Settlement is grateful for the opportunity to build its legal program capacity,” said **Christopher Hanway, Executive Director of Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement**. “Given the current political climate, educating and delivering critical services could not be more essential in ensuring that our most vulnerable communities are protected. We commend the Mayor and his Office of Immigrant Affairs for its investment in expanding much needed services to immigrant New Yorkers and look forward to the positive impacts.”

“Mercy Center is very excited to have the opportunity through the ActionNYC Legal Services Fellowship to expand our capacity to offer a wider range of immigration legal services, especially to the hard to reach communities that we serve,” said **Steve Stritch, Executive Director at Mercy Center**, a community organization in the South Bronx. “Now more than ever it is critically important to be able to help immigrants learn about their rights and successfully navigate the path to becoming New Americans.”

“The MinKwon Center assists thousands of Korean and Asian American New Yorkers each year, who otherwise might have fallen through the cracks due to limited language capabilities or cultural difficulties,” said **James Hong, Co-Director of MinKwon Center for Community Action**. “MinKwon is grateful that the Mayor's Office understands the vital role of community-based organizations such as ours in helping immigrant communities, and we are excited to participate in the ActionNYC fellowship so that we can continue improving our legal services and outreach work.”

“We know African immigrant communities are underserved and vulnerable to immigration fraud,” said **Zeinab Eyega, Executive Director of Sauti Yetu Center for African Women**. Being selected for both Outreach and Legal Services ActionNYC fellowships will scale up Sauti Yetu's capacity to further provide culturally informed and linguistically appropriate immigration services.”

“More than 90 percent of street vendors in New York are immigrants, and many of them are in need of immigration-related legal services,” said **Sean Basinski, Director of the Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center**. “This fellowship will enable us to offer a new menu of legal support to our members.”

“The YWCA of Queens is so happy to have been selected as an ActionNYC Fellow – as a community organization that has provided services to the Queens immigrant community, we recognize that in this time of uncertainty, we must further strengthen our services so that we can ensure that immigrants, who contribute in positive ways to our community, can receive the

resources they need to continue to be productive members of the United States,” said **Katherine H. Kim, Executive Director of YWCA of Queens.**

About MOIA

The NYC Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs promotes the well-being of NYC’s immigrant communities by recommending policies and managing programs that help to successfully integrate immigrant New Yorkers into the civic, economic, and cultural life of the City. For more information on all MOIA services, go to nyc.gov/immigrants, call 311, and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

About NYC Health + Hospitals

NYC Health + Hospitals is the largest public health care system in the nation serving more than a million New Yorkers annually in more than 70 patient care locations across the city’s five boroughs. A robust network of outpatient, neighborhood-based primary and specialty care centers anchors care coordination with the system’s trauma centers, nursing homes, post-acute care centers, home care agency, and MetroPlus health plan—all supported by 11 essential hospitals. Its diverse workforce of more than 42,000 employees is uniquely focused on empowering New Yorkers, without exception, to live the healthiest life possible. For more information, visit www.nychealthandhospitals.org and stay connected on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NYCHHealthandHospitals> or Twitter at [@NYCHHealthSystem](https://twitter.com/NYCHHealthSystem).

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