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FROM COUNCILMEMBER

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LEGISLATIVE AND COMMUNITY REPORT- *April 30, 2010*

Here at the City Council we are still in the thick of budget season, and I am sorry to report that the situation does not look good. Last week, **I headed to Albany** to encourage our State lawmakers to take swift action to reasonably control spending, but also to preserve funding for essential services for New Yorkers. We met with Finance and Education Committee members, among others, to fight for the City Council's budget priorities. In particular, I fought a proposed new fee on NYC Housing Development Corporation (HDC) for financing **affordable housing** projects because I view it as a long-term threat to affordable housing in our city. I also advocated for the preservation of State **funding for school aid, MTA student MetroCards, Medicaid** and other health-related services for NYC's uninsured, the **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)**, **domestic violence** programs, **homeless intervention** programs, **senior centers**, and more. I would encourage my constituents to get in touch with the Governor and State level representatives to speak up for the preservation of the most important services for New Yorkers. You can identify your Senators at <http://www.nysenate.gov/> and your Assemblymembers at <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/>.

Here in the City, I am also very concerned about the impact of **budget cuts on the Fire Department**, and I recently joined fellow lawmakers and community members at Engine 93 on West 181st Street to speak out against proposed cuts which will result in significant firehouse closings and staff cutbacks. In particular, coverage from 129th to 220th Street would become very limited. This is extremely dangerous because it means longer response times and when it comes to fighting fires, every second counts. Please speak out to your elected officials, especially at the State level, to let them know that these cuts are a big mistake. It would also be helpful to write Mayor Bloomberg, or write letters to the editor of your local paper demanding the City keep our fire companies open.



I was dismayed to learn of **Arizona's new immigration law** (Arizona Bill 1070) and attended a press conference this past week in support of a crowd of protesters opposing the law. I worry that this law, if left standing, could open the floodgates of hateful legislative change throughout the country. We cannot sit quietly and assume that this battle will be won or lost in Arizona. We must stand up and push back against anti-immigrant sentiment, and celebrate the significant contributions immigrants have made throughout our country's history and continue to make on a daily basis. Although some proponents of the law believe it will promote security, in my view, the law will only impede law-enforcement personnel, inevitably fueling distrust between citizens and police officers at a time when what is truly needed is cooperation between community members and law-enforcement agents. Racial profiling is not only morally bankrupt, but research also shows that it is an ineffective policing tactic. Now more than ever, comprehensive immigration reform is needed at the federal level. I recently attended an immigration rally in our nation's capital to urge President Obama to come through on his promise of progressive reform. In the coming months I would encourage all community members to join me at upcoming rallies to call for change. Feel free to call one of my offices to find out how to get involved. Let's join forces and let our voices be heard from New York, to Arizona, to Washington, D.C.: Immigration reform now!

Many of my Council colleagues are also gearing up to do their part in the fight for immigration reform. At the most recent Stated Meeting on April 29th, we passed a **resolution calling on the U.S. Congress to pass a**

comprehensive immigration reform bill in 2010. The resolution highlights conditions faced by immigrants living in the New York area and asks federal lawmakers to act quickly to prevent other State level legislation similar to the Arizona measure. In addition, the Council voted to pass several other important measures. In particular, we passed two bills to bring **increased transparency and accountability to the juvenile justice system.** One requires the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to provide an annual report on demographic information for all detained youth and the second requires reporting on staff use of disciplinary measures including physical and mechanical restraint and confinement, and reporting regarding injuries and alleged cases of child abuse and neglect. This important legislation will allow lawmakers and advocates to better account for this vulnerable population. In addition, the Council passed a **resolution calling on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to eliminate its' 30 year old prohibition on blood donation by gay and bisexual men.** This ban was based on prejudice, a knee-jerk reaction, and misunderstandings about the HIV/AIDS disease. Given the constant need for blood, it does not make common sense to prohibit donations from an entire population. Finally, the Council passed legislation to **phase out loudspeaker systems used by tour guides on open-air sightseeing buses.** These systems must be replaced with headphone systems by July 2015. This measure will ensure the continued success of our City's tourism industry while limiting unwanted noise for the City's permanent residents.

As Chair of the Council's Education Committee, I recently spoke at a **rally sponsored by the Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ)** regarding two Resolutions I recently introduced to the full Council to help our City's



lowest performing schools. The first is the **School Transformation Zone Resolution** which provides the comprehensive school-turnaround strategy that the DOE currently lacks. School closings should be a last resort – not option number one. The resolution calls on the DOE to establish a Zone to provide low-performing schools the supports they need to improve, prior to being subject to closure. The second Resolution is an **Expanded Learning Time Resolution.** Significant research indicates extended learning time is a key strategy for the improvement of low-performing schools and for closing academic achievement gaps based on race and social class. This resolution calls on the DOE to implement models of expanded learning time by providing 30% more time in the school day and year at low-performing schools. If you are a community member concerned

about public education, you can get involved with CEJ by going to <http://www.nyccej.org/>

After the rally, I made my way inside of City Hall to chair a hearing of the Council's Education Committee where we examined the two Resolutions, and also the very important **Blue Book Bill** - otherwise known as the "True Book Bill." For too long, we have had a major problem with the way school capacity is calculated which results in severe overcrowding, inadequately large class sizes, and a lack of sufficient art rooms, science labs, and gyms. Schools cannot provide the education we expect them to without adequate space, and this legislation takes an important step toward ensuring a more accurate assessment.

A Few Upcoming Events – Get Involved!

- May 1st **March and Rally sponsored by Alliance for Labor and Immigrant Rights and Jobs for All.** Help make history this May day. Assemble at 11am at Foley Square. For more information contact Jason Green at Jason@theadvancegroup.com or 212-239-7323.
- May 1st **Congressman Rangel's Community Leadership Meeting** is scheduled for 9am at the Isabella Geriatric Center at 515 Audubon Avenue. Join the Congressman to discuss the important issues currently under consideration by the U.S. House, U.S. Senate, and State and local legislatures. Please RSVP via socrates.solano@mail.house.gov or by calling 212-663-3900.
- May 19th **Vantage residents, learn how the Vantage Settlement affects you!** You may be entitled to compensation. Project Remain/Nos Quedamos hosts a discussion with NYS Attorney General & local elected officials at Isabella Geriatric Center (515 Audubon Ave - Enter on W 190th St.) at 6:30 p.m.

For additional information on the contents of this community report or to see previous reports, call my office at one of the numbers listed above or visit my webpage at <http://council.nyc.gov/d7/html/members/home.shtml>