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**Testimony presented by Anthony Ng
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**Before the Immigration Committee of the New York City Council
Kendall Stewart, Chair**

The State of Immigrant Services in New York City

May 15, 2006

Good afternoon. My name is Anthony Ng, and I am the Legislative Advocate at United Neighborhood Houses of New York, Inc. (UNH). UNH, founded in 1919, is the nonprofit membership organization for 35 settlement houses and community centers in New York City. Our member agencies comprise one of the largest human service systems in New York City and the largest group of settlements in the nation. 8,000 employees operate programs and activities in over 300 locations, reaching 500,000 New Yorkers each year. Services provided by our members include: early childhood education, after-school programs, teen centers, GED classes, job training, tutoring, recreation, meals and supportive services for the elderly, mental health counseling, drug prevention, and art, music and drama programs.

The human services delivered by our members are utilized by both immigrants and non-immigrants alike. To reach immigrants with these services, they are delivered in a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner. UNH member agencies have their central office in, or have program sites located in some of the City's major immigrant communities such as Jackson Heights, Sunset Park, Flatbush, East Harlem, Tremont, Flushing, Coney Island, and Chinatown, which collectively, have high Latino, Black Caribbean, West African, East Asian, South Asian, and Russian populations.

In addition to these human services, immigrant New Yorkers also access services that include English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, immigration legal services, and immigrant worker legal services. Attached to my testimony is an article I wrote for the Gotham Gazette, which appeared this month, and describes these immigrant services, the need, and the funding that is available for them in New York City.

As you know, the City Council's Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI), is an important source of funding for these key immigrant services. We thank the City Council for its ongoing support and strong leadership on IOI. Through your efforts last year, a total of \$9.1 million was included in the final FY2006 budget. As a result, the number of non-profit organizations receiving IOI funding more than doubled to about 130, thereby increasing the availability of funding for ESOL and legal services for immigrants.

As we head into the budget negotiations for the FY2007 budget, we urge that IOI funding is fully restored in the final budget for FY2007. We thank the City Council for identifying a \$9.25 million restoration for IOI in its budget response released in early April. In addition to restoring \$9.25 million, we also urge for a more timely process to distribute the funds soon after the budget is adopted this year. As you know, organizations that received IOI funding in prior years were not notified until late November 2005, that they were to again receive IOI funding. We understand that new groups receiving IOI funding didn't get notified until January/February of 2006. This delay in awarding the funds made it difficult for ESOL classes to start, and for legal services to be delivered. Adequate and timely public funding for immigrant services is essential to strengthening the capacity of existing programs and is an investment towards the development of a sustainable community-based infrastructure to deliver these services in a quality manner.

Once again, we thank the City Council for your great interest and support of this Initiative, and look forward to working with you to ensure that the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative is funded at \$9.25 million in the adopted FY2007 budget.

Thank you.

United Neighborhood Houses is the federation of 35 settlement houses working to improve the lives of New Yorkers by speaking out and working for progressive change in social and public policies. We partner with our members to address critical needs of youth, senior citizens and families, and to create communities where people thrive.

UNH Members: Boys & Girls Harbor-CAMBA-Center for Family Life in Sunset Park - Chinese American Planning Council - Citizens Advice Bureau - Claremont Neighborhood Centers - Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation - East Side House Settlement - Educational Alliance - Forest Hills Community House - Goddard Riverside Community Center - Grand Street Settlement - Greenwich House - Hamilton-Madison House - Hartley House - Henry Street Settlement - Hudson Guild - Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement House - Kingsbridge Heights Community Center - Lenox Hill Neighborhood House - Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center - Mosholu Montefiore Community - Riverdale Neighborhood House - SCAN New York - School Settlement Association - Shorefront YM-WHA of Brighton-Manhattan Beach, Inc - Southeast Bronx Neighborhood Centers - St. Matthew's and St. Timothy's Neighborhood Center - St. Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation - Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center - Sunnyside Community Services - Third Street Music School Settlement - Union Settlement Association - United Community Centers - University Settlement Society