



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams
New York City Council Committee on Immigration
January 27, 2016**

Good morning, Chair Menchaca, and members of the New York City Council's Committee on Immigration. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at your oversight hearing on how New York City can better support ethnic media to ensure that immigrant communities receive information on local matters.

I applaud Chair Menchaca's commitment to this issue and share his concerns. In October of 2014, I joined with the New York Black Publishers Alliance to host a forum at Brooklyn Borough Hall that explored the challenges facing ethnic media and the need for government to take action. Additionally, I am pleased to have worked with New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer on an analysis performed by his office to help determine in what media outlets city advertisements were placed.

The viability of ethnic media outlets is critical to the overall health of New York City's press landscape. Every voice needs to be heard, and publications that have been trusted to speak to the issues of our various diverse communities are the most viable vehicles for millions of voices in our five boroughs. We believe the City has a history of shortchanging ethnic media from advertising dollars, the lifeblood of these businesses, which is affecting our ability to communicate about important municipal opportunities and resources to oft-underserved New Yorkers.

These media outlets have a circulation over 3 million, over a third of New York City's population, yet the amount of city resources dedicated to outreach and advertising in these outlets is far less. According to analysis, over the course of the past three fiscal years, only 12.7 percent of City funding for advertising was dedicated to ethnic media. Only one ethnic media publication, *El Diario*, cracked the top ten of publications by total spent from 2013-2015.

Of the spending in ethnic media, only 4.6 percent of funding went to recruitment advertising which is comprised of job postings and listings. This is a troublingly low figure considering that, according to the Migration Policy Institute, Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals were more likely to live in poverty than English-proficient individuals. In 2013, about 25 percent of LEP individuals lived in households with an annual income below the official federal poverty line—nearly twice as high as the share of English-proficient persons (14 percent). In addition, according to Organizing for Unemployment Reform (OUR) New York, non-English speaking constituents often face the highest barriers to accessing employment opportunities.

In short, people cannot find jobs if they do not know that they are available. Residents cannot engage in community-driven neighborhood development if they do not know that they are being asked to participate. Our track record is unacceptable if we are to fulfill our shared mission of a vibrant democracy with a fully engaged populace.

The information gleaned from this analysis and today's oversight hearing should be used to fuel a serious conversation that results in greater institutional backing and funding for engaging all New Yorkers, regardless of their background, in this grand experiment called New York City. I am hoping that the City Council will mandate quarterly reporting from each City agency with an advertising budget on how much of their dollars are going to ethnic media, creating an CompStat-type system for City advertising. We cannot continue to wait until year's end to find out our agencies are falling short. Furthermore, I believe we must focus attention on the state and federal levels as well, ensuring that the distribution of all of our government advertising resources are deployed in a manner that maximizes effective and strategic community penetration.

I look forward to continuing to work with Comptroller Stringer as well as both sides of City Hall to raise our voices and put forward a thoughtful plan that identifies how we can do better and spend smarter in our civic outreach.