



DONOVAN RICHARDS
President

CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT OF THE BOROUGH OF QUEENS
120-55 QUEENS BOULEVARD
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11424

718.286.3000
www.queensbp.org
info@queensbp.org

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The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

Few investments we've made this year have been more impactful than the New York State Excluded Workers Fund, which connected a historically overlooked yet undeniably vital sector of our labor force with financial assistance unjustly kept from them during the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate your administration's work to support this community, along with that of lawmakers like State Sen. Jessica Ramos and Assemblymember Carmen De La Rosa who sponsored legislation to create such a fund, as no borough has benefitted more from it than Queens—the epicenter of the epicenter of the pandemic and home to our state's largest community of excluded workers.

But there is no doubt that our excluded workers still face severe economic hardship. Even after this week's announcement that the \$2 billion fund has been fully exhausted, it is clear that a pressing need for additional financial assistance still exists here in Queens. Along with allies like Make the Road New York and the Fund Excluded Workers Coalition, I am calling on your administration to immediately invest an additional \$3 billion in your executive budget to replenish the Excluded Workers Fund, benefitting tens of thousands more working-class immigrant families in Queens and statewide.

One day after the State Department of Labor announced on September 24 that it could no longer guarantee Excluded Worker Fund payments, my office hosted an Immigrant Resource Fair in Elmhurst, Queens. More than 300 people attended the fair that afternoon, the vast majority of whom sought assistance applying for the fund. Still today, my office's Immigrant Welcome Center fields calls from individuals asking if the fund will reopen. These are constituents still struggling to find work, battling the scourges of food insecurity and homelessness, trying to get out from under overdue utility bills or paying for a funeral for a loved one lost to COVID-19. Many are also picking up the pieces following's Hurricane Ida's floods, leaving them the brink of financial ruin through no fault of their own.

The Excluded Workers Fund has been nothing short of lifesaving for tens of thousands of Queens families. But even more have found themselves locked out of the financial assistance they deserve, leaving them without a lifeline in these difficult times. To ensure they are no longer left behind, the Excluded Workers Fund must immediately be replenished and reopened. There is no time to waste.

Sincerely,

Donovan Richards
President
Borough of Queens