



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Sen. Serrano and East Harlem Against Deportation Coalition Launch Final Policy Report, "Immigration Reform Starts Here"

JOSÉ M. SERRANO September 17, 2009

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East Harlem, NY – Senator José M. Serrano and a coalition of elected officials and community leaders – dubbed East Harlem Against Deportation – today released its final policy report, and sent 1,000 appeal letters to President Obama. It was the culmination of an organizing and educational campaign that began in May of this year.

The report, titled “Immigration Reform Starts Here,” outlined five policy recommendations for New York City and State to protect immigrants and their families. The proposals range from improved visa certification by the police department to the establishment of a dynamic

municipal ID card.

The 1,000 appeal letters were collected throughout the spring and summer, and urge the President to advocate comprehensive immigration reforms that will put a stop to unjust detention and deportations that tear families apart. The letters, many of them with personal stories, were signed by legal residents on behalf of their immigrant friends and family.

"To make the case for comprehensive reform in Washington, we need to energize the grassroots, and also curb the unjust practices that are taking place here at home," said Serrano. "We consider New York a sanctuary city, yet too many immigrants are left standing outside in the cold."

The Senator pointed to Rikers Island, where 13,000 inmates – many of them arrested on minor charges or later found not guilty – have been placed into deportation proceedings since 2004. The policy report calls on the Department of Correction to reassess its collaboration with federal immigration officials.

"The fact of the matter is that this is just sliver of the things that we should be doing on immigration," said Congressman Charles B. Rangel. "Immigrants are not just an important part of our history but they are vital members our current communities and certainly key to our future as a nation."

"At the end of the day, a green card or lack thereof, should not get in the way of the humanity we show each other. How we treat our fellow Americans, how we educate them and how we protect their rights is as much an example of the character of this country as it is a matter of sound public policy."

"Immigrants are indispensable to the vibrancy and progress of our city," said Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer. We recommend these policy actions to ensure the public safety, well-being and dignity of immigrants and all New Yorkers."

"Throughout its history, East Harlem has not just provided a home to immigrants, but rather helped them flourish and realize the American dream. The activism, art and culture born out of this community has made New York a stronger, more vibrant place," said Councilmember Melissa Mark-Viverito.

"Today, foreign-born residents comprise more than 25 percent of the East Harlem population. On behalf of their families and friends, we stand together to fight for their rights. We owe to hard-working immigrants families to improve our school system and ensure greater parental engagement. Moreover, we need to make sure that our constituents remain safe from unjust detentions and deportations."