

**Testimony of Steven Choi, Artificial Intelligence Community Engagement (AICE) Initiative  
January 15, 2026, Hearing on Artificial Intelligence Policy & Governance,  
New York State Senate Standing Committee on Internet & Technology,**

Good afternoon Chair Gonzalez and members of the Senate Standing Committee.

My name is Steven Choi, and I am the Director of the Artificial Intelligence Community Engagement (AICE) Initiative. For nearly two decades, my work has focused on ensuring that grassroots communities—especially communities that have historically been excluded from policymaking—have a real seat at the table on the public decisions that shape their lives.

I began my career organizing and supporting immigrant and working-class New Yorkers at MinKwon Center for Community Action, where I saw firsthand how policy debates too often happen *about* communities, not *with* them. I later helped lead and build coalitions at the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), working alongside nearly 200 community-based organizations across the state to advance inclusive public policy. In recent years as a consultant, I have focused on building diverse coalitions that ensure that our most marginalized community members are represented in public policy decisions.

I'm here today to share a core message: **regardless of the direction New York ultimately takes on AI legislation—whether focused on innovation, regulation, civil rights protections, economic development, or all of the above—the most important value this body can affirm is that impacted communities must have a voice in shaping what comes next.**

The core principle: Communities must have power, not just “input”

Artificial intelligence is already influencing decisions that matter to New Yorkers: access to jobs, housing, education supports, language access tools, public benefits systems, health care administration, and more. It certainly has the potential to increase efficiency and provide individualized supports for marginalized communities for public good—but without intentional governance, it can also scale bias, deepen discrimination, and reduce accountability.

For many New Yorkers—particularly Black, Latino, AAPI, Indigenous, immigrant, LGBTQ+ communities, people with disabilities, low-income New Yorkers, and communities with limited English proficiency—this risk is not theoretical. These communities are often the first to experience new systems as “subjects,” not partners: tested on, scored by, or processed through tools they didn't choose and cannot challenge.

**That is why I urge the Senate to make a baseline commitment: AI policy must be built with communities, not merely presented to them after the fact.**

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The barrier: Meaningful participation requires meaningful education

There is a challenge, though, that I want to state plainly: **many of the communities most affected by AI aren't familiar with it.** They do not yet have accessible, trustworthy

opportunities to learn what AI is, how it is being used, what risks it can create, and what benefits it can unlock. People cannot shape policy on systems they have not had a fair chance to understand.

This is not a failure of communities - it is a failure of the system. Technical debates are often inaccessible by design—full of jargon, English-only information, and assumptions about time, money, and digital access that many New Yorkers do not have.

### What AICE is doing—and what we are learning

**Education is the first threshold.** If New York wants legitimate, democratic governance of AI, we must invest in the capacity of communities to participate.

That is precisely what the Artificial Intelligence Community Engagement (AICE) Initiative was designed to do. Supported by the New York City Council, AICE partners with 22 trusted community-based organizations that already serve New Yorkers where they are—across neighborhoods, languages, and cultures—to deliver accessible AI literacy training and structured opportunities for community members to share concerns, questions, priorities, and real-world experiences.

In practice, our work is centered on three commitments:

1. **Trust and access:** communities learn best through trusted messengers—local organizations with credibility, language capacity, and relationships.
2. **Practical understanding:** we focus on real-life uses of AI - what it is, how it can be used, what are potential guardrails, how it is now showing up in hiring, education, benefits access, small business, and government services—so knowledge is grounded and actionable.
3. **Two-way engagement:** we won't just be “teaching AI.” We are using this network and the engagement opportunities to build pathways for communities to inform policy and practice—what safeguards they want, what opportunities they need, and what harms they are already experiencing.

### Core asks for the New York State Senate

I am not here to endorse one specific policy approach over another. I am here to urge the Senate to embed **community power** as a non-negotiable element of whatever AI framework New York builds. This means specifically:

- 1) *Make “impacted community participation” a foundational requirement of AI policymaking*

Establish a clear expectation—across agencies and legislation—that AI governance must include structured, ongoing engagement with impacted communities. This means engaging early (before deployment and before rules are finalized), demanding that AI actors include community participation as a core part of their AI-related work, and ensure that engagement is designed for inclusion (language access, disability access, flexibility in timing).

2) *Invest in grassroots AI literacy statewide as critical civic infrastructure*

If New York wants meaningful public engagement, it must fund community-based AI education—delivered through trusted CBOs—so residents can participate in good faith and with confidence.

AICE is one model that can be replicated and adapted. We would welcome the opportunity to share our curriculum, implementation approach, partner model, and lessons learned—and to support a strategy to expand this across New York State.

3) *Ensure marginalized communities are not only protected, but positioned to benefit*

AI policy should not only prevent harm—it should also ensure that historically excluded communities have access to:

- workforce pathways and reskilling tied to emerging AI-related jobs,
- supports for small businesses and entrepreneurs to use AI responsibly, and
- public-sector procurement and deployment standards that prevent exclusion and discrimination.

New York has a chance to ensure that AI companies it is trying to attract are also committed to providing real community benefit as well.

4) *Build accountability that communities can actually use*

Transparency and accountability mechanisms must be understandable and accessible to ordinary New Yorkers. If people can't challenge harmful outcomes, then transparency is merely symbolic. As a result, New York should prioritize systems where communities can:

- know when AI is used in consequential decisions,
- understand the basis for outcomes, and
- seek recourse when systems cause harm.

## Conclusion

New York has an opportunity to lead—not only in how it governs artificial intelligence, but in how it governs it democratically. I urge you to anchor your work in a simple proposition: **that communities most affected by AI must help shape the rules, safeguards, and opportunities that define its role in our state.** And to do that, New York must make the first investment that real participation requires: education, delivered through trusted grassroots institutions.

The AICE Initiative is proud to contribute what we are learning, and we are eager to partner with the State to help replicate this model across New York.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I welcome any questions.