



New York State Legislature
Joint Legislative Budget Hearing - Human Services
Submitted by the New York Immigration Coalition
February 5, 2026

My name is Dave Basnet, I am the Senior Manager of Immigrant Rights at the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC), a coalition of more than 200 immigrant and refugee organizations advancing access to public services, inclusion, and justice. We unite immigrants, members, and allies to build power so all New Yorkers can thrive. We thank you Chair Pretlow and Chair Krueger for convening this important hearing.

For years, advocates have called for sustained investment to build the systems New York needs to protect the rights and well-being of all residents, regardless of immigration status, and to ensure that families and communities can thrive, lead, and remain rooted in the places they call home. Achieving this requires meaningful funding and legislative commitments that support and protect immigrant New Yorkers, expand language access, support civic participation and engagement, reduce child poverty reduction, advance universal childcare, and ensure food access is equitable.

The NYIC calls for targeted investments in the FY27 budget, including **\$175 million** to expand immigration legal and related social services; **\$10 million** to establish a statewide language access infrastructure; an **increase in the State Child Tax Credit** to \$1,500 per child annually; and increased investments for state-funded food benefit security. Together, these investments will ensure that human services are accessible in practice, regardless of language or immigration status. In addition, the NYIC urges passage of the **New York For All Act (NY4ALL, A.3506/S.2235)**, as well as the **Access to Representation Act (ARA, A.270/S.141)**, the **Building Up Immigrant Legal Defense Act (BUILD, A.2689/S.4538)**, and the **Language Access Expansion Act (S.5535 / A.4875)**.

Immigration Legal Services

New York must act now to significantly expand immigration legal services in the FY27 budget. A \$175 million state investment is essential to protect immigrant families and to support community stability, public safety, and the state's economy. Legal representation is among the most effective tools to ensure due process, prevent family separation, and uphold New York's values amid escalating federal immigration enforcement.

For these reasons, NYIC calls for a **\$175 million investment in the FY27 Budget** to provide



urgent and long-term support for immigrant families in New York. This funding should be allocated as follows:

- **\$85 million** to sustain existing legal and social services programs, fund recruitment and retention initiatives, and ensure equitable compensation;
- **\$50 million** for new emergency deportation defense (legal and social services); and
- **\$40 million** for capacity-building and infrastructure investments to expand the pipeline of immigration legal professionals entering the field and strengthen service provider infrastructure to support the scaling up of services.

We also urge the Legislature to pass the **Access to Representation Act (ARA, [A.270/S.141](#))** and the **Building Up Immigrant Legal Defense (BUILD, [A.2689/ S.4538](#)) Act.**

The Trump Administration's mass deportation and detention agenda has expanded indiscriminate enforcement actions that sow fear, destabilize communities, and threaten the well-being of immigrant families across New York. The state must act decisively by ensuring universal access to competent legal representation for people facing deportation. Immigrants risk permanent family separation and return to dangerous conditions abroad, yet there is no guaranteed right to counsel for those who cannot afford an attorney. As of December 2025, more than 90,000 people in New York are navigating immigration court without legal representation. Data underscores the urgency: detained immigrants with counsel are up to 10.5 times more likely to prevail in their cases than those without representation. These figures reflect an immediate need for intervention.

The **ARA** would establish a statutory right to counsel for immigrants facing deportation in New York and create stable, sustainable funding for legal service providers to meet the urgent need. By guaranteeing representation regardless of ability to pay, the ARA would ensure that no one is forced to face a trained government attorney alone. This measure would strengthen due process protections and help families remain together.

The **BUILD Act** lays the foundation for the ARA by investing in the infrastructure legal service providers need to protect immigrant communities over the next four years. It establishes a dedicated, multi-year funding stream to support training, holistic services, and local and regional coordination. By strengthening provider capacity, the BUILD Act ensures that legal programs can respond effectively to current enforcement pressures while building long-term, sustainable systems to protect the rights of immigrant New Yorkers statewide.



Immigration Enforcement/ NY4ALL

Across the country, federal immigration enforcement has escalated dramatically, with masked agents carrying out aggressive enforcement actions that terrorize families, destabilize communities, harm children, and, in some cases, result in the use of deadly force. At the same time, President Trump's federal spending package, the so-called "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" (OBBBA), injects an unprecedented \$170 billion into immigration enforcement, ensuring that these practices will continue to expand. Recent enforcement actions in Minnesota, including the killing of Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis, offer a stark warning of the dangers of unchecked federal enforcement for immigrant communities nationwide, including here in New York.

New York's leadership in upholding freedom, fairness, and family unity is critical. We urge both houses to pass the **New York for All Act ([A.3506/S.2235](#))** without delay and to make its enactment a top priority so that all New Yorkers can live and work safely with their families. By preventing state and local resources from being used for civil immigration enforcement, this common-sense legislation will protect public trust, safeguard all New Yorkers, and ensure that New York is not facilitating the federal deportation and detention system.

While Governor Hochul's Executive Budget Proposal includes Article VII language addressing enforcement activity at sensitive locations, it does not adequately protect New York residents from constitutional violations, abusive enforcement practices, or government-sanctioned violence carried out by ICE under the current federal administration.

The New York for All Act would establish clear, practical boundaries between state and local authorities and an increasingly aggressive federal immigration enforcement regime. By broadly prohibiting the use of state and local resources for civil immigration enforcement, the bill would allow immigrant New Yorkers to engage with schools, health care providers, and other community institutions without fear of arrest or deportation. While no state law can fully eliminate the harms caused by ICE's overreach, limiting collaboration—as several other states have done—can prevent many immigrants and other New Yorkers from being drawn into an expanding deportation system that relies heavily on local law enforcement involvement.

Expanding Language Access

Language access is not a stand-alone service—it is core infrastructure that determines whether New Yorkers can meaningfully access legal services, food assistance, health care, housing supports, and other essential programs. For millions of New Yorkers with limited English proficiency, the absence of adequate interpretation and translation effectively denies access to



public services altogether. For FY27, the State must take decisive action to strengthen its language access infrastructure. We urge the Legislature and the Executive to include Article VII legislation in the FY27 Executive Budget to advance the **Language Access Expansion Act (S.5535/A.4875)** and to allocate **\$5 million** to strengthen statewide language access capacity, with a primary focus on the New York State Office of Language Access (OLA).

While OLA plays a central role in setting standards and supporting compliance, the office is significantly under-resourced relative to its mandate. As a result, agencies and localities lack sufficient guidance and technical assistance, and community-based organizations are left to fill gaps—often without funding.

Child Poverty Reduction and Universal Childcare

To achieve the goal set by the Child Poverty Reduction Act, which aims to cut child poverty in half over the next 10 years, the New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) proposes **expanding and strengthening the State Child Tax Credit**. This expansion would provide more significant support for families throughout New York. We recommend increasing the credit to \$1,500 per child annually and indexing it to inflation. Additionally, we suggest extending eligibility to include children up to age 18 and making these changes permanent. In addition, we recommend enacting the Working Families Tax Credit to ensure that both the Empire State Child Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit are accessible to all immigrant families

To help alleviate the high cost of living for all New York families, we recommend adopting the Executive Budget's proposal of **\$1.7 billion** to expand pre-K and 3-K programs, fund the child care assistance program, and launch groundbreaking universal child care pilots. This includes **\$73 million** for universal care for two-year-olds in New York City and **\$60 million** for community care models for children aged 0 to 3 in three regions outside New York City. To ensure that these programs are truly universal, they should be available to all immigrant families. Additionally, we suggest adding funding so they are not one-time pilots but serve as a bridge to a permanent statewide universal child care system.

Ensuring Food Justice for All

OBBA removed access to benefits for many people reliant on them to survive. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food for 1 in 7 New Yorkers—most of whom are children, elderly, or the disabled. These are some of the most vulnerable in our communities. Already there are over 673,000 New Yorkers with Temporary Protected Status, DACA, and undocumented status that are excluded from SNAP for no other reason than their citizenship status.



The passage of **SNAP4All** ([A.6632/S.9033](#)) would help alleviate some of this pressure on our food system. We believe that providing food benefits for excluded New Yorkers is a concrete way to make food more affordable, build stronger local economies, and build a more food-secure New York. A **\$244 million investment** would create a state-funded food benefit for two severely impacted groups:

- **41,000 individuals with newly excluded immigration statuses under HR1**, such as survivors of domestic violence or human trafficking or those facing dire circumstances in their native countries including violence, poverty, and climate disruption
- **65,000 households with children excluded from SNAP**, as identified by the Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council (CPRAC)

At a time of unprecedented need and opportunity, our state can meet this moment by passing meaningful legislation and making strategic, forward-looking investments that move beyond short-term relief to build longstanding systems of care, justice, and inclusion. By funding emergency representation, protecting our state's resources from being misused for immigration enforcement, establishing a coordinated statewide immigration legal infrastructure, strengthening language access, investing in year-round civic engagement, advancing child poverty reduction, supporting universal childcare, and ensuring food security, New York can transform its response from reactive to resilient—ensuring that all families and communities can thrive, participate fully, and remain rooted in the places they call home.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Submitted by:

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