

ONLINE EDITION

Filipino Reporter

FAIR, FEARLESS, FACTUAL

Mayor de Blasio Appoints Fil-Am

BY EDMUND M. SILVESTRE



Maria Torres-Springer delivers a speech after she was appointed by Mayor Bill de Blasio (right) as commissioner of the Department of Small Business Services. At left is Dr. Ramanathan Raju, who was named commissioner of Health and Hospitals Corporation.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio named this week a Filipino-American to head the city's Department of Small Business Services as he pledged to deepen the agency's connections to neighborhoods across the five boroughs.

In announcing the appointment of Maria Torres-Springer last Tuesday at City Hall, de Blasio noted that Torres-Springer is a U.S.-born daughter of immigrants from the Philippines who often struggled to make both ends meet by holding multiple jobs.

The first person in her family to go to college, she went to Yale University where she majored in ethics, politics

and economics, and received her master's in public policy from Harvard University, the mayor noted.

"Maria has the 'leadership, the right mindset, the skills, the energy, the desire' to spearhead changes in the department that will be the focal point agency representing small businesses, including those in outer boroughs, de Blasio said.

"For seven years, one of her crucial responsibilities was to work closely with the Department of Small Business Services so she knows the department intimately and understands what an impact it can make in terms of supporting small businesses, helping the minority- and women-owned business to have opportunity, and getting job training for those who are left out of our economy."

"Maria gets all that personally not only because of her extraordinary professional background but also because of her own and her family's own experience," the mayor said.

"Maria will focus on outer borough neighborhoods that have not been treated so fairly in recent years."

De Blasio said Torres-Springer will also work to ease "punitive" fines that have crippled businesses.

"Our small businesses were struggling to begin with. They did not need overly aggressive enforcement and overly punitive fines," the new mayor said, condemning his predecessor's policy, which many shops complained included high fines for tiny infractions.

For her part, Torres-Springer said she's "deeply humbled and honored" to join the de Blasio administration "to strengthen the city and ensure that everyone rises together."

"The charge you have given me as the commissioner of SBS is quite clear," she said, "to deliver aggressive and innovative ideas that support the city's 200,000 small business, the lifeblood of our economy across a diverse

neighborhood and industries.”

“In a city as great as ours, the vast economic inequalities that exist here are simply unacceptable, New Yorkers deserve better,” she said.

“I know firsthand what it means to grow up with very little, but I stand here today ready to serve as SBS commissioner not despite of that background but because of it.”

“I know first hand what it means to grow up with very little, but I stand here today ready to serve as SBS commissioner not despite of that background but because of it.”

“We sought out progressive, proven leaders who are committed to serving diverse communities across this city. And in Maria and Raju, we found them. Whether it’s deepening our outreach to immigrant entrepreneurs long overlooked by City Hall, or bringing new community health care clinics to low-income neighborhoods, our approach will be the same: We will lift up every community. This will be one city, where everyone rises together,” said de Blasio.

A former executive vice president and chief of staff at the New York City Economic Development Corporation, Torres-Springer was a key leader in project teams that helped launch the Applied Sciences Initiative and the redevelopment of Coney Island.

As commissioner of Small Business Services, she will establish a new revolving loan fund to help local businesses grow, expand outreach to immigrant-owned businesses, and help launch new economic development hubs in underserved communities.

“As the child of immigrants, I understand our city is strongest when every New Yorker has access to quality economic opportunities and good middle class jobs,” said Torres-Springer.

“As commissioner at the Department of Small Business Services, I look forward to ensuring that every small

business owner — no matter where they are from, where they live, or what they look like — has access to the resources they need to succeed.”

According to City Hall, Torres-Springer has a demonstrated record of expanding small business opportunities, with a history of building relationships with community, government and private businesses to support economic development projects throughout New York City.

Torres-Springer’s experience collaborating with local communities began when she worked at the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), a nonprofit focusing on bringing together community organizations and stakeholders with private and public resources to help revitalize neighborhoods based on locally-defined priorities.

At the New York City Economic Development Corporation, she oversaw development and implementation of more than 100 initiatives designed to support innovation and entrepreneurship across all industries.

From directing the revitalization of a 27-acre district and surrounding area in Coney Island and creating an amusement and entertainment district, to helping lead the Applied Sciences NYC initiative, spurring new applied science and engineering campuses across New York City, Torres-Springer has continually proven her commitment to creating a dynamic city economy that works for all New Yorkers.

She has also served at the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development & Rebuilding as a senior policy advisor and as the chief operating officer of Friends of the Highline, the non-profit organization that oversees the maintenance, operations and public programming for the High Line.

Friends of High Line provides over 90 percent of the High Line’s annual operating budget and is currently working to raise the essential private funding to help complete the High Line’s construction and create an

endowment for its future operations.

Torres-Springer is married to Jaime Springer and they have a daughter Lea.

She is expecting her second child.

