

Testimony Of Steven Banks, Commissioner Of The New York City Human Resources Administration, at the New York City Council's Immigration Committee on – May 1, 2015

Good morning Chairperson Menchaca, Co-sponsor Councilmember Dromm, and Councilmembers Eugene, Koo, Espinal, Jr., Levin and Kallos. Thank you for inviting us to appear before you today to participate in this oversight hearing regarding the implementation of IDNYC.

As you know – every day in all five boroughs – the City's Human Resources Administration (HRA) is focused on carrying out the Mayor's priority of fighting poverty and income inequity and preventing homelessness. With an annual budget of \$9.7 billion and a staff of 14,000, HRA provides assistance and services to some three million low-income children and adults, including:

- economic support and social services for families and individuals through the administration of major benefit programs (Cash Assistance, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program benefits (food stamps), Medicaid, and Child Support Services);
- homelessness prevention assistance, educational, vocational, and employment services, assistance for persons with disabilities, services for immigrants, civil legal aid, and disaster relief;
- and for the most vulnerable New Yorkers: HIV/AIDS Services, Adult Protective Services, Home Care and programs for survivors of domestic violence.

HRA was honored when we were selected to be the administering agency for the historic municipal identification card program, IDNYC. Through a collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and the Mayor's Office of Operations, HRA is proud to serve as the "back office" for IDNYC. The infrastructure for this program, including the front-facing enrollment staff as well as the back-end review staff and all equipment, sits within HRA. This is why the whole of the IDNYC budget is in HRA.

As Commissioner Agarwal and Director Tarlow both described, when IDNYC was launched on January 12 of this year, demand far exceeded our expectations, and we have met this demand with a rapid and dramatic expansion of capacity. We have now put IDNYC cards into the hands of approximately 2% of New Yorkers in 12 weeks when we had hoped to enroll 1% of New Yorkers over the course of the first year. Clearly, this is a card that New Yorkers want but more importantly need.

Office of Operations Director Tarlow described the details of this expansion for you a few moments ago, and now I want to briefly discuss HRA's role in the launch of these additional enrollment sites over the past several months. In short, nearly every part of our agency has contributed to the effort. In addition to our External Affairs division in which IDNYC senior and front-line staff are housed, our General Support Services group has provided construction, moving and labor support; our Management and Information Systems department has handled the wiring, cabling and equipment installation and setup at all IDNYC enrollment centers citywide and the offices for the IDNYC leadership team and program integrity offices; our

Office of Staff Resources has facilitated the interviewing, hiring and training of all IDNYC program employees; our Office of Legal Affairs has handled procurements and provided support and guidance regarding legal issues; and staff from across our program areas participated as volunteers assisting with site management at enrollment sites across the City. Additionally, we have even contributed locations for this effort: the Manhattan hub sites on Water Street downtown and on West 135th Street in West Harlem are both HRA facilities, and, as you just heard, on April 6, we launched a new site in Coney Island, which is co-located with an HRA SNAP/Food Stamps Center.

As capacity increased on the front end, our program integrity operation has kept pace every step of the way, all while maintaining the security of applicant information and the integrity of the program. New York City has made a tremendous commitment of resources to the IDNYC program to ensure the inclusion of robust security protocols to prevent fraudulent activity and the creation of a fraud-resistant identification card. The result is the most advanced municipal identification card in the United States, built with the best technology, secured with thoughtful privacy protections, and accessible to the widest cross-section of individuals.

The IDNYC Program Integrity Team is comprised of highly trained fraud specialists, drawn from HRA's Investigation, Revenue and Enforcement Administration (IREA), the investigative arm of the agency. The Program Integrity Team is responsible for preventing fraud in the IDNYC application process and making sure that the card is only issued to applicants who have proven their identity and residency through accepted and legitimate documentation. The specialists of the Program Integrity Team use independent data to verify applicant information, and confirm that fraudulent documents are not accepted as the basis for obtaining a card. They also resolve matches identified through duplicate image search software run on our internal system of the IDNYC applicant pool. Together with the enrollment staff, who are trained to detect and flag questionable applications, they ensure that IDNYC is a safe, secure, and trusted form of identification for all New Yorkers.

The City's ability to maintain program integrity and issue an identification card with real value to New Yorkers depends on an ongoing commitment to identifying fraud. And we know that our processes and procedures to detect fraud are doing what they are intended to do, as two instances of possible fraud were detected since the IDNYC program's launch as of March 31. Specifically, in two unrelated instances, the program's integrity review process detected an individual seeking to obtain an IDNYC card in another individual's name and identity documents. Both of these applications were found to be an instance of suspected fraud and the potential victims were alerted by letter about the improper use of their identity information. Both applications were denied.

Privacy and security of applicant data are foremost priorities for the IDNYC program. As the administering agency of the program, in partnership with MOIA and the Mayor's Office of Operations, HRA issued rules governing the application process, and I issued Executive Orders as HRA Commissioner that:

- Established strict security and confidentiality standards for applicants' personal information;
- Created a stringent protocol for any outside requests for information;
- Placed substantial limits on the use of duplicate image search technology; and

- Provided for an agency administrative review for applications that are denied.

This series of executive orders outlines the City's commitment to strong privacy protections and procedures to ensure program integrity.

As set forth in the Preliminary FY16 Budget that was released in February, the IDNYC budget is \$13.4 million this year and \$9.7 million in FY16. In the Preliminary Budget, the projected decline in funding and staffing was based on projected future demand following the extraordinary ramping up process this year to meet the current demand. As we found this year, however, if the level of demand remains higher than projected, adjustments can be made on an expedited basis.

Following release of the Preliminary Budget, IDNYC and HRA have been working with the Administration to ensure that there are enough resources to meet the needs going forward as part of the process for developing the FY16 Executive Budget that is being finalized for release next week.

Since the announcement of this historic initiative, from the launch in January up through the present day, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Mayor's Office of Operations and HRA have worked in partnership to implement this groundbreaking program. We have responded to demand by quickly and thoughtfully ramping up operations, and we are confident that we have established a program that is both accessible and secure. Looking towards the future, we will continue to monitor, evaluate and assess ways to improve IDNYC, and we welcome the input and guidance of the Council as we move forward, and working together we can ensure that IDNYC will truly be the one card for all New Yorkers.

Thank you again for including us in this hearing and we welcome any questions you may have.