

Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc.
Testimony at the New York State Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Economic
Development
January 30th, 2024

Thank you to Senator Krueger, Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Ryan, and Assemblymember Stirpe for the opportunity to testify today. The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc. (CPC) is to promote social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC was founded in 1965 as a grassroots, community-based organization in response to the end of the Chinese Exclusion years and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Our services have expanded to include three key program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 80,000 people per year in all five boroughs through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites. CPC employs over 700 staff whose comprehensive services are linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and highly effective in reaching low-income and immigrant individuals and families. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities.

CPC is urging the State legislature to pass the [Unemployment Bridge Program \(UBP\) \(S3192/A4821\)](#) and the [Invest in our New York](#) package of bills that would stimulate the economy, transform our social safety net, and ultimately create a better New York State for all.

Immigrant communities were the ones at the frontlines of the pandemic and continue to provide essential services. The passage of the Excluded Workers Fund in 2021 was a lifesaving and valuable source for many of our immigrant communities as they recover from the health and economic crisis. CPC is one of many organizations that were supporting the rollout of the fund and assisting community members on the application process. While the fund was active, we experienced an extremely high volume of calls and fielded many questions around eligibility, fears around status, and the complicated process of document collection. We saw firsthand how the fund has supported our community members tremendously in being able to pay for basic necessities such as food, rent, and transportation. However, there were still thousands of people that were unable to access these funds despite struggling to make ends meet. Our current unemployment insurance programs and social safety nets in general do not include our immigrant communities. Therefore, we are urging the State legislature to pass UBP through investing \$500 million to fund a permanent unemployment fund for excluded workers that would include undocumented immigrants, freelancers, and formerly incarcerated individuals in the FY25 budget.

Furthermore, our undocumented immigrants should be part of the social safety net because they are contributors to our economy, cultural fabric, and continue to be pivotal in the State's recovery process from the pandemic. In fact, according to the Economic Policy Institute, they estimated that undocumented immigrants pay about [\\$1.1 billion](#) each year in state and local taxes in New York. The Institute also found that undocumented immigrants contributed [\\$1.4 billion](#) in unemployment insurance taxes in New York State over the last decade. In addition and most importantly, there are approximately [380,000 undocumented essential workers](#) in New York State that have been putting their lives on the line to ensure the safety of others. However,

we have not responded to those sacrifices with the respect and dignity that they deserve. As taxpayers and integral parts of how this State functions, we need to create a social safety net that treats them as such.

One of the many criticisms of UBP is the question of how this program would be funded. UBP has its own revenue stream through the [Digital Ad Tax \(S5551/A5842\)](#), which would be imposed on big tech companies, making \$100 million or more in gross annual revenue from digital advertising services which includes Facebook and Microsoft. This digital ad tax is expected to raise [\\$1 billion](#) for the State during a time where we are struggling to reduce the budget deficit. This revenue raising strategy would not be balanced on the backs of small businesses and the average New Yorker but rather companies that have circumvented paying taxes will finally contribute their fair share which would fund the program and provide the necessary support to our excluded workers.

We have historically seen our State turn towards budget cuts and the passage of the austerity budget with the justification that there is simply no funds to support our most marginalized communities. However, there are tangible and effective solutions that can be utilized to alleviate this burden like raising revenue through taxing the ultra-wealthy through passing the Invest in Our New York package of bills:

- [The Capital Gains Bill \(S2162/A2576\)](#)
- [The Progressive Income Tax Bill \(S2059/A3115\)](#)
- [Corporate Tax Reforms \(S1980/A3690\)](#)
- [The Heirs Tax \(S2782/A3193\)](#)
- [The Billionaires Tax \(S1570/A3252\)](#)

In one of the richest countries in the world and in the richest city in the world, we need to ensure that our vulnerable communities are not struggling and that starts with the top 5% of New Yorkers paying their fair share. Revenue raising mechanism is well-supported by New Yorkers. In fact, according to a [poll conducted in January of 2023](#) by TargetSmart, they found that 70% of New Yorkers supported taxing the wealthy and 84% were in favor of taxing billionaires.

These revenue-raising bills would allow for the State to fund programs like UBP and agencies that are providing direct support to communities that need it the most. When we meaningfully and intentionally invest in our New Yorkers, we dismantle systems of oppression and we create more equitable ones that are care-based.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify and we look forward to working with the State legislature and the Governor to achieve these goals in the upcoming budget.

If there are any questions, please reach out to Ashley Chen, Policy Analyst at achen9@cpc-nyc.org.