

RUSSIAN-SPEAKING IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY APPEAL
TO OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS, GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNMENT-FUNDED AGENCIES IN NORTHERN MANHATTAN

Whereas our Council Members have convened a town hall on Jewish poverty in New York City;

Whereas, according to the UJA-Federation of NY Jewish Community Study of 2011, Russian-speaking immigrant Jews have the highest levels of poverty among all the groups in New York Jewish community – **45 percent** (including 20 percent among the working-age population and over 70 percent among the elderly);

Whereas, according to the same study, Russian-speaking Jews make **at least 18 percent** of the entire Jewish population in NYC (and according to other estimates **up to 25 percent** of the total), and their numbers are growing;

Whereas, in spite of this, the share of funding by New York Jewish philanthropies targeting specifically the socio-economic needs of Russian-speaking Jewish immigrants is **less than 1 percent** of the total, and the share of Russian-Jewish immigrant employees in Jewish nonprofit organizations is about the same;

Whereas Northern Manhattan is one of the areas of the largest Russian-Jewish presence;

Whereas the YM&YWHA of Washington Heights and Inwood, the largest Jewish nonprofit in the area, has the annual budget of \$5.4 million, which has nearly doubled in size over the past 10 years, yet it eliminated its Russian department and reportedly has only one part-time Russian-speaking staff member out of circa 250 employees;

Whereas Russian-speaking grassroots organizations serving our Russian-Jewish community in Northern Manhattan are not being recognized as partners by American Jewish communal philanthropies and have no operating support from any funding source, and our immigrant professionals are not being utilized by American Jewish organizations for the benefit of the community,

Russian-speaking Community Council of Manhattan and the Bronx, together with our supporters and friends in the community, appeals to our City government officials and Jewish nonprofits in the area, urging them to do the following:

- **Establish a trilateral working group on the economic integration, inclusion, and advancement of Russian-speaking immigrants in the area, with equal participation of our City government, American Jewish nonprofits in Northern Manhattan, and Russian-speaking grassroots community organizers and organizations;** the working group should issue a report on its activities and accomplishments within a year;
- For the YM&YWHA of Washington Heights and Inwood, to **re-establish the Russian-speaking department, with an advisory board and staff composed of representatives of the Russian-speaking immigrant community and its nonprofit organizations;** the department should provide essential services to the elderly and recent immigrants, including paid interpreters on demand in government, medical, and other essential offices as well as free transportation on a regular basis for those with limited mobility, and other forms of support to Russian-speaking elderly. The agency should provide office space and operating support to grassroots Russian-speaking immigrant nonprofits.
- For our Council Members and other elected officials, to **secure the establishment of Russian-speaking community liaison positions in their offices and other key government agencies in Northern Manhattan.**