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**MAYOR DE BLASIO AND MAYOR'S FUND ANNOUNCE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES
OF IMMIGRANT NEW YORKERS WHO DIED DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
WITH PROGRAM TO COVER BURIAL COSTS**

NEW YORK—Mayor de Blasio announced today that the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City has reached its goal of \$1.5 million to launch the Immigrant COVID-19 Burial Assistance Program. With funding support from SOMOS Community Care, Robin Hood, Trinity Church Wall Street, and Amalgamated Bank the program provides financial assistance to immigrants—regardless of legal status—who are unable to pay for the funeral expenses for relatives who died during the pandemic.

“The COVID-19 crisis has taken a devastating toll on immigrant communities and people of color,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “In their time of grief, all New Yorkers, regardless of their income or immigration status, should have the right to bury their loved ones how they see fit.”

“Of the more than 17,000 confirmed coronavirus deaths in New York City, over half lived in primarily Black and Brown neighborhoods. To have so many deaths concentrated in underserved communities is unacceptable. We must act swiftly to relieve the pain and suffering felt by our communities of color,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. “Each death is the loss of a loved one, leaving a whole community in mourning. This funding will help New Yorkers lay their loved ones to rest with dignity.”

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on immigrant New Yorkers and communities of color, with Black and Latino New Yorkers dying at twice the rate of their white counterparts when adjusted for age. The Immigrant COVID-19 Burial Assistance Program will address the current gap in services to some immigrant families due to their exclusion from the State and City's existing burial assistance program. The Immigrant COVID-19 Burial Assistance Program, created by the Mayor's Fund with the support of the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA), will help the loved ones of undocumented immigrants who have died during the COVID-19 pandemic grieve with dignity.

HRA, with support from New York State, provides some assistance for those who cannot afford funeral costs through its Burial Assistance program, which provides up to \$1,700 toward burial expenses. This program is only available to families of low-income decedents without resources or assets available to pay for a funeral and who were eligible for HRA Cash Assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Social Security benefits including

Supplemental Security Income. Thus, the loved ones of undocumented immigrants are unable to access these funds.

HRA will screen all individuals who apply for burial assistance in the same manner that it currently does for its Burial Assistance program, and the Immigrant COVID-19 Burial Assistance Program will provide burial assistance funds to qualified immigrant New Yorkers in the form of pre-approval for the cost of a planned funeral or reimbursement for services that have already been paid. Additional information including the application and instructions can be found at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/burial-assistance.page>

“The City grieves with the New Yorkers who have lost someone during this pandemic,” said **Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs Bitta Mostofi**. “All New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, have the right to be treated with dignity and respect for the life they lived and love they have given. We are grateful to our partners for this new funding, which will help even more New Yorkers celebrate, honor, and memorialize their loved ones in the way that they see fit.”

“The last thing that a family member or friend should have to worry about after the passing of a loved one is how to finance the cost of a funeral or burial,” said **Department of Social Services Commissioner Steven Banks**. “DSS-HRA is proud to work with the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City to expand the City’s vital Burial Assistance program to cover even more New Yorkers in need, ensuring that immigration status does not impede the right to a dignified funeral.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed many of the structural inequities that our immigrant New Yorkers and communities of color experience every day,” said **Acting HRA Administrator Gary Jenkins**. “All too often, federal public benefits programs fail to reach our City’s vulnerable noncitizen population, and HRA is committed to ensuring that all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, can be laid to rest with dignity and respect.”

"Black and brown New Yorkers—many of them members of our beloved immigrant communities—are overwhelmingly experiencing the impacts and trauma associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. They have disproportionately lost their jobs, health, and loved ones," said **Toya Williford, Executive Director of the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City**. "The ability to grieve the loss of a family member should not be a privilege awarded only to certain members of our communities. The Mayor's Fund, with the support of our partners, is honored to ensure that this natural right is afforded to our immigrant neighbors who have lost loved ones during the pandemic."

“Immigrant communities – our communities – are in tremendous pain right now grappling with the devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Being able to grieve and to pay respects to family members and friends who lost their lives to this virus is essential to beginning to rebuild and to heal,” said **Dr. Ramon Tallaj, Chairman and Founder of SOMOS Community Care**. “We’re grateful to the Mayor’s Fund for spearheading this initiative to ensure that cost does not prevent anyone from laying their loved ones to rest. At SOMOS, we test, treat and feed New

Yorkers regardless of immigration status. That dignity must be afforded in death as well as in life.”

“For the families and friends who have lost loved ones to COVID-19, being able to grieve in accordance with their religion, customs, and tradition can provide some comfort amid their sorrow,” said **the Rev. Phillip A. Jackson, Priest-in-Charge and Vicar of Trinity Church Wall Street**. “The expanded Burial Assistance program helps ease the additional pain of our undocumented immigrant brothers and sisters who cannot access other programs to help with this crucial need.”

“We at Robin Hood remain focused on those who have been disproportionately affected and left behind by this crisis, including the incredibly resilient immigrant community who makes up our city,” said **Wes Moore, CEO of Robin Hood**. “This pandemic has taken so many of our neighbors too soon and we are dedicated to honoring their memory by supporting their loved ones in their time of grieving.”

“New York City's essential workers—many of whom are immigrants—have been the heroes of this city throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. They have paid the ultimate price,” said **Keith Mestrich, CEO of Amalgamated Bank and Chair of the Amalgamated Foundation**.

"The Amalgamated Foundation is proud to support the Mayor's Immigrant COVID-19 Burial Assistance Program to help ensure that these families have the means to grieve the loved ones they have lost during these unprecedented times."

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