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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

February 3, 2010

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Release# 013-2010

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Council Moves to Protect Undocumented Immigrant Children *New legislation would ensure children are receiving adequate care and services*

City Hall – City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn today announced the introduction of legislation that would improve the services provided to young immigrants who are eligible for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). The bill, sponsored by Immigration Committee Chair Daniel Dromm, seeks to ensure the children are being identified as quickly as possible and are receiving all appropriate services. Council Members Felix Cabrera, Robert Jackson and Maria del Carmen Arroyo are co-sponsors of the legislation and were all present at today’s announcement.

The Council bill would charge the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) with determining the best method for:

- Systematically identifying children within ACS that qualify for SIJS as early as possible;
- Assisting children in obtaining the immigration services they need as soon as they are identified; and
- Reporting to the City Council on the unit’s plan within six months of the legislation’s enactment.

Speaker Quinn stated, “Today’s legislation will protect a group of New Yorkers who need it most. We know that hundreds of children in our system have been slipping through the cracks and we need to take action to catch them before that happens. That is exactly what this bill will do. And in providing greater services to these children today, we are sure to have a strong and even more diverse New York City of tomorrow.”

“Immigrant children deserve the same rights as everyone. This bill will help children in ACS supervision get access to the immigration services they need. We must ensure that children who qualify are given the opportunities they deserve. I look forward to working with Speaker Quinn and my colleagues to move this important bill which will protect the rights of immigrant children in foster care.” said **Immigration Committee Chair Daniel Dromm**.

“Through introducing this legislation today, we are sending the strong message that this Council is dedicated to protecting the untold number of immigrant children going through our city's foster care system,” said **Council Member Felix Cabrera**.

(over)

A provision of the Federal Immigration Act of 1990, SIJS enables certain undocumented immigrant children to become permanent residents and to obtain green cards.

Currently, without a dedicated division for immigrant services, affected young people and their caregivers lack necessary information and services. Furthermore, once a young person turns 21 years old, he or she loses eligibility for SIJS. These young people are left without the opportunity to become a United States citizen and face the very real possibility of deportation.

The Council's legislation would result in an accurate and efficient system of identification and coordination of immigration services that would most fully protect the rights of immigrant children.

"I am proud to sponsor a local law that will help young immigrants in foster care to come of age with the support they are entitled to by Federal mandate. At the same time, it is embarrassing that our city, a citadel for immigrants, needed to be prodded by the Council to comply with the standards on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status," said **Council Member Robert Jackson, Co-Chair Council's Black, Latino and Asian Caucus.**

"I strongly support this commonsense piece of legislation. It seeks to address the complex challenge of children aging out of foster care with unresolved citizenship and residency issues, which can hinder their ability to become productive members of our society," said **Council Member Maria del Carmen Arroyo, Co-Chair of the Council's Black, Latino and Asian Caucus.**

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