



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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CM CHIN INTRODUCES BILLS TO INCREASE ACS ACCOUNTABILITY TO IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

CITY HALL – Today, Council Member Margaret S. Chin joined her colleagues on the Progressive Caucus in putting forward a legislative package to improve accountability and transparency in the child welfare system, especially for immigrant families. Council Member Chin introduced two bills requiring the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS) to provide immigrant families with multilingual disclosure forms at the onset of investigations as well as reports on the length of time it takes for families to contact children in ACS custody.



“In order to fulfill its mission to protect vulnerable children and reunify families, the Administration for Children’s Services must be an active partner in educating and outreaching to immigrant families and providing the necessary resources to move forward. But oftentimes, these families are left in the dark,” said **Council Member Chin**. “Sadly, many interactions between immigrant parents and ACS are marked by cultural or linguistic misunderstandings that can lead to unwarranted separations. What’s more, it can take days before a child in ACS custody can get in contact with their families. By requiring that ACS provide multilingual disclosure forms and mandating reports on the length of time it takes to get families in contact with their children, my bills focus on maximizing transparency and trust, and minimizing trauma.”

A 2019 *Yale Law Journal* report found that a lack of linguistic and culturally appropriate services severely hamper noncitizen parents' interactions with ACS. In some instances, it has taken months for ACS to locate services in the appropriate language. Moreover, children of immigrant families in ACS custody are rarely placed in language-appropriate foster homes. This creates barriers for the parent-child relationship as children begin to lose their native language skills.

Council Member Chin explored this issue through legislation to shed light on the universe of children from limited English proficient families in foster care. [Local Law 37](#) requires ACS to produce a feasibility study for language classes, and tracks families' primary languages, the languages spoken by children within the foster system, and the barriers and strategies to address such language needs. The New York City Council passed the legislation in January of 2018.

This series of bills was inspired by a constituent case that Council Member Chin worked on in 2017 that involved a Chinese American child who had been placed in foster care at the age of five, and assigned to a family that did not speak her parents' native language. While in the foster care system, the child lost her proficiency in Chinese, which posed as a barrier to reunification. Tragically, her mother was not able to see her child before she passed away.

Council Member Chin's legislation will play an integral role in the efforts to prevent other immigrant families from experiencing this same trauma. This year, she led a push to secure \$200,000 in critical New York City Council funding for kinship caregiver legal services, which will provide civil legal assistance to caregivers – like grandparents or other relatives – who take care of children who are separated from their birth parents.

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