



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

250 Broadway, Suite 1882
New York, NY 10007

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

NOVEMBER 25, 2014

Contact: Sam Spokony [CM Chin] 212-788-7259, sspokony@council.nyc.gov
Louis Cholden-Brown [CM Johnson] 212-788-6979, lcholden-brown@council.nyc.gov
Jordan Levine [CM Levine] 212-928-6814, jlevine@council.nyc.gov
Sarah Anders [CM Kallos] 212-860-1950, sanders@benkallos.com

COUNCIL MEMBERS INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE GREATER EQUALITY FOR MULTI-RACIAL NEW YORKERS BY ALLOWING THEM TO IDENTIFY AS MULTI-RACIAL ON CITY DOCUMENTS

*Current City Documents Force Multi-Racial New Yorkers to “Check One Box”
Instead of Allowing Them to Identify as Multi-Racial — This MUST Change!*

Today, Council Members Margaret Chin, Corey Johnson, Ben Kallos and Mark Levine introduced legislation (Int. 551) to allow multi-racial New Yorkers to identify as more than one race on city agency documents. The bill will correct a longstanding injustice regarding the collection of demographic data on those documents.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, New York City has more than 320,000 multi-racial residents — more than any other U.S. city. However, those residents are currently forced to “check one box” when it comes to filling out their racial background on city agency documents, such as city employment forms, afterschool program applications, NYCHA forms, taxi license applications, discrimination complaint forms, and many others. Simply put, multi-racial residents are unable to fairly and accurately identify as multi-racial.

This legislation would change that by requiring the city to allow New Yorkers to identify as multi-racial on any city documents that collect demographic data, rather than forcing them to choose a single race and ignore all others.

The aforementioned Council members also introduced an accompanying resolution (Res. 472) today, calling on the state and federal governments to make the same multi-racial identification requirement on all government documents that collect demographic data. This is based on the fact that the rapid growth of the multi-racial population is widespread across an increasingly diverse nation. The 2010 U.S. Census found that the nation’s total multi-racial population grew by 32 percent between 2000 and 2010, and a Pew Research Center study released in 2012 found that more than eight percent of all marriages in the U.S. are now interracial.

Prior to introducing the legislation and resolution, the Council members were joined in announcing the legislation and resolution by the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. and the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families.

“Right now, more than 300,000 multi-racial New Yorkers are unfairly forced to choose one race and ignore all others on city documents, just because those documents haven’t caught up with 21st-century demographic shifts,” **said Council Member Margaret Chin.** “Our legislation will finally provide New Yorkers with the fundamentally important ability to identify as multi-racial on city documents. It’s a simple change that will make a powerful impact — not just because it will lead to more accurate data regarding our city’s incredible racial diversity, but because it’s the right thing to do.”

“As a man of Irish-Korean descent, I am acutely aware of the limitations that people identifying with more than one race encounter on the local, state and federal levels,” **said Council Member Corey Johnson.** “It is extremely frustrating to be forced to misrepresent oneself when filling out forms that require checking off only one box from an often limited list of ethnicities. Nine million people nationwide identified as multiracial in the last US Census; a likely undercount given the difficulties of multiracial representation on paper. It is imperative that we do everything in our power, here in New York City and on the state and federal levels, to ensure all agencies accommodate multiracial identification in their paperwork and databases.”

"As the father of two mixed-race children, I'm proud to support this legislation requiring the City to recognize racial identity as something more complicated than a pre-defined checkbox category on a form," **said Council Member Mark Levine.** "The US Census already allows for people to report multiple races. There's no reason for the city to lag behind in allowing people to more accurately represent their heritage."

"This bill will allow multiracial New Yorkers to accurately identify themselves on forms — the only fair option," **said Council Member Ben Kallos.** "Every New Yorker should feel comfortable filling out official documents and be able to express their identity."

“Recognizing multiracial identification in official documents is fundamental because it is a recognition of the diversity of peoples, ethnicities and backgrounds,” **said Elba Montalvo, President of the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc (CHCF).** “It will foster respect of one another and contribute to build self-esteem, identity formation and help eradicate discriminatory practices.”

“As the nation’s only pan-Asian advocacy organization, the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families supports Council Members Chin, Johnson and Kallos in their efforts to allow persons of mixed race to identify as multiple races on government forms,” **said Sheelah Feinberg, Executive Director of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF).** “As the fastest growing population in New York City, Asian Pacific Americans have also become increasingly multiracial and multi ethnic and it is vital that these individuals be counted. We are hopeful that this legislation will ensure that every New Yorker, no matter their mixed heritage, will be counted.”

###