



UNION SETTLEMENT



**Gale
Brewer**
MANHATTAN
BOROUGH
PRESIDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York, New York
October 27, 2020

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Kristine Cooper – (212) 828-6024; kcooper@unionsettlement.org
Michelle Cruz – (917) 841-0519; micruz@council.nyc.gov
Aries Dela Cruz – (917) 960-1187; acruz@manhattanbp.nyc.gov

MULTIMILLION DOLLAR GRANT PROGRAM PROVIDES INITIAL \$2M TO EAST HARLEM SMALL BUSINESSES IMPACTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

New York City Council Member Diana Ayala, Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer and Union Settlement today announced that \$2 million in grant assistance has been provided to over 150 East Harlem businesses adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial grants are from the \$4 million East Harlem Small Business Grant Program created to address the dire needs of local small business that are struggling to stay open.

The \$4 million East Harlem Small Business Grant Program, which is funded through the New York City Economic Development Corporation, was created to fill the immediate need for funding to allow hundreds of small “mom-and pop” businesses that have been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic to stay open, and for businesses that had closed temporarily to re-open.

The grant program is administered by Union Settlement’s Business Development Center (USBDC), which provides a broad array of services, support and assistance to East Harlem’s small businesses and entrepreneurs. Since the program was launched in July, Union Settlement has been overwhelmed with applications from almost 300 East Harlem businesses seeking support. USBDC staff has worked tirelessly to verify the information being provided to ensure that the applicants are eligible and then to disburse funds as quickly as possible.

“I am proud that the creation of the East Harlem Small Business Grant Program will help alleviate some of the economic devastation brought on by the pandemic” said **NYC Council Member Diana Ayala**. “The survival of our small businesses is critical to the prosperity of our community.”

"Small businesses are at the heart of East Harlem," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “I’m thrilled my office, Union Settlement, Council Member Diana Ayala, and the NYC Economic Development Corporation acted quickly to provide crucial funds, especially during this period of re-opening.”

“Union Settlement has seen firsthand the devastating impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on East Harlem businesses,” said **David Nocenti, Executive Director of Union Settlement**. “We have worked with many of these businesses for many years, and we are absolutely committed to helping them through this time of crisis. I want to particularly thank Council Member Ayala, Manhattan Borough President Brewer and the EDC for making this grant program possible, allowing us to help these businesses not just survive, but to thrive.”

"We must support small business if we want to achieve a successful and fair economic recovery," said **James Patchett, President & CEO of New York City Economic Development Corporation**. "This grant funding is a critical step in providing relief and stability for businesses in East Harlem."

"Small businesses across East Harlem are cornerstone contributors to our vibrant and beautiful community," said **NYS Assemblymember Robert J. Rodriguez**. "We want to see them thrive and we want to see them through a full recovery. These funds will create opportunities for stability, growth and continued prosperity. I thank Councilwoman Ayala for her continued advocacy and look forward to our continued collaboration in support of East Harlem small businesses."

"As a former local business owner at an M/WBE based in Harlem, I know firsthand that access to capital is incredibly important to small businesses," said **NYS Senator Brian A. Benjamin**. "This is especially true in times of financial hardship when the local businesses our communities rely on for employment and services are under additional pressure. I am so grateful this grants program has been created to allow businesses to re-open and stay open, and I congratulate Councilmember Diana Ayala and all who made this possible."

"We have witnessed firsthand the devastating impact the coronavirus continues to have on small businesses around the country," said **Congressman Adriano Espallat (NY-13)**. "Local businesses and local business owners are vital to our communities and our efforts must continue to deliver the necessary resources and economic assistance to help keep these establishments open for business. I commend Councilwoman Ayala, Manhattan Borough President Brewer, and Union Settlement on today's announcement of the East Harlem Small Business Grant Program to provide further economic recovery and assistance to help area small businesses survive."

"Covid-19 has decimated most of our area businesses with many not able to open at this time due to financial shortfalls," said **Nilsa Orama, Chair of Manhattan Community Board 11**. In addition, the PPP program was not the right fit for some of our area businesses. CB11 would like to thank Councilwoman Diana Ayala, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and others for their hard work to help ensure that local businesses get assistance that they need at this critical time."

"The grant for the East Harlem Small Business Grant Program came at the exact moment we needed it," said **Dr. Inram Ahmed, Let's Smile Dental**. "With the support of the grant we were able to keep our doors open."

"I am deeply grateful to the East Harlem Small Business Grant Program" said **Lillian Santos, Owner, Nocciola Ristorante**. We are beginning to see an increase in business and are positive about the future."

The East Harlem Small Business Grant Program provides grants of up to \$20,000 for businesses with up to 20 employees and annual revenues of up to \$1 million. The businesses must be located within the boundaries of East Harlem/Community District 11 (bounded by 96th Street to the south, 142nd Street to the north, Fifth Avenue to the west, the East River and Harlem River to the east, and includes Randall's Island, Ward's Island and Marcus Garvey Park). All businesses must have been open and operating prior to March 1, 2020. Grants will be used by grantees to offset operating expenses (such as rent, utilities, payroll, insurance, and other operating costs). Union Settlement will continue to accept grant applications until all funds are distributed. Businesses interested in applying for a grant can go to Union Settlement's website at www.unionsettlement.org/smallbizgrant.

About City Council Member Diana Ayala

Diana Ayala has worked for nearly two decades serving the people of the 8th City Council District in social service agencies and government, and is a passionate advocate on issues including housing, gun violence, and senior services. Council Member Ayala was born in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, and moved to New York City with her family as a child. Growing up in public housing after a time in the shelter system, she experienced numerous challenges that would help give her a unique voice and perspective in government and politics, and drive her passion for public service. She has been instrumental in crafting legislation that has become law, from expanding tenants' rights to cracking down on the sale of synthetic marijuana (K2). Please visit <https://council.nyc.gov/district-8/> for more information.

About Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer

Gale A. Brewer is the 27th Borough President of Manhattan. Since she took office in 2014, she has successfully passed legislation to reform the deed restriction process, add 'caregivers' to the city's anti-discrimination law, remove criminal history questions from initial employment applications (the "Fair Chance Act"), and enforce requirements for street numbers on buildings in Manhattan (to aid emergency workers). She has also spearheaded community planning initiatives at the South Street Seaport, in East Midtown, and in other neighborhoods to address development and zoning issues. Brewer previously served on the City Council for 12 years, serving as the founding chair of the Technology Committee and leading the Government Operations Committee. Please visit www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov/ for more information.

About Union Settlement

Union Settlement is an on-the-ground resource for East Harlem residents of all ages, and a passionate advocate for the needs of underserved communities. Established in 1895, Union Settlement provides a broad array of education, wellness and community-building programs to over 10,000 East Harlem residents each year, including early childhood education, afterschool and summer youth programs, college preparation, job readiness, English language classes, behavioral health counseling, small business assistance, senior centers, Meals on Wheels and more. For more information about Union Settlement, visit www.unionsettlement.org.

About the Union Settlement Business Development Center

The Union Settlement Business Development Center (USBDC) seeks to enhance the economic vitality of East Harlem by assisting in the creation of jobs and helping residents, entrepreneurs and small businesses become successful. The USBDC offers a broad array of services, including business education classes, technology education classes, and technical assistance. The USBDC also coordinates the activities of the East Harlem Community Alliance, which is a consortium of over 200 local businesses, nonprofits, religious congregations, elected officials and government agencies.

###