



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

**Letitia James**

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Press Release

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## Public Advocate Letitia James Calls On City District Attorneys To Increase Vigilance for Scams Targeting Immigrants

Scams Target Vulnerable Populations, May Increase In Light of Executive Immigration Action

(New York, NY)— Following President Barack Obama’s announcement about executive immigration action that will prevent up to five million people from being deported, New York City Public Advocate Letitia James expressed concerns about possible scams targeting immigrants. In a letter to New York City’s five (5) District Attorneys, Public Advocate James called for increased stepped-up vigilance for those seeking immigration assistance.

Public Advocate James called on the city’s District Attorneys to aggressively pursue fraud directed towards immigrants through including *notario fraud*, in which a perpetrator uses linguistic and cultural norms to confuse individuals into thinking they are licensed immigration attorneys or similar authorities.

“While many of us are thrilled at President Obama’s much-needed action to prevent the deportation of millions of immigrants, we must ensure the executive action does not lead to immigrant exploitation. Already, too many immigrant families have fallen victim to *notario fraud* and other scams that target vulnerable individuals and families, and we must be watchful of any potential increase in these illegal practices,” said **New York City Public Advocate Letitia James**. “I call on our city’s District Attorneys to crack down on any increase in immigration scams and ensure immigrant New Yorkers are protected from fraud and abuse.”

Furthermore, Public Advocate James called on the city’s District Attorneys to uphold the immigrant assistance fraud legislation signed by New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo earlier this year, and ensure that those who commit fraud are given the highest penalties for their violations of the law.

***Public Advocate James’ letter is below and attached.***

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November 21, 2014

District Attorney Cyrus Vance  
District Attorney Kenneth Thompson  
District Attorney Daniel Donovan Jr.  
District Attorney Richard Brown  
District Attorney Robert Johnson

Dear District Attorneys:

With the announcement of President Obama's Executive Action last night, millions across this nation will be able to come out from the shadows and live life free from the threat of deportation. In our city alone, the announcement touches the lives of thousands, who waited far too long for relief.

While we can celebrate this victory and the bravery of our Commander in Chief, we must also be aware of the dangers that face these men, women, and children as they take their next steps towards legalization. Like many, I celebrate this with great joy, but also know that it comes with an increased risk of immigration fraud.

One such example of fraud targeting immigrants that in New York is *notario* fraud, where perpetrator uses linguistic and cultural norms to confuse individuals into thinking they are licensed immigration attorneys or similar authorities.

Too many immigrant families have fallen victim to *notario* fraud and other scams that target vulnerable individuals and families and I am concerned the President's action may be followed by an increase in these illegal practices.

In an effort to combat these crimes and protect these New Yorkers, I urge you to increase your office's efforts to target fraud, uphold the immigrant assistance fraud legislation signed by Governor Cuomo, earlier this year, and ensure that those who commit fraud are given the highest penalties for their violations of the law.

If scam artists increase their shameful practices, our district attorneys must increase their vigilance.

In turn, I am dedicating my office to partnering with community groups, advocates, and fellow elected officials to educate our communities in all five boroughs on the dangers of immigration services fraud.

Together, we can ensure that the door to legalization and citizenship remains open and accessible for all eligible men and women. I look forward to working with you and with our colleagues across the city.

Yours Truly,



Letitia James

Public Advocate for the City of New York