



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams
New York City Council
Committee on Education
February 26, 2020**

Good afternoon, my name is Eric Adams and I am Brooklyn's borough president, representing more than 2.6 million residents who call Brooklyn home. I want to thank Council Member Mark Treyger, chair of the City Council Committee on Education for convening this hearing on Resolution 0146-2018, creating a Diwali holiday for New York City schools.

Approximately 200,000 New York City residents identify as Asian Indian and celebrate Diwali, whether as Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, or Buddhists. The Festival of Lights has significant meaning for these vibrant communities in our beloved city. We proudly and rightly put New York forward as a melting pot where anyone from anywhere can add to the fabric that makes our city great through the celebration of time-honored cultural traditions. We don't require people to dress or worship in any particular way. We accept diversity as a common good. For these reasons, we should recognize Diwali as a school holiday.

Students and families that celebrate Diwali should not have to decide between attending school and practicing their faith. They should not have to fall behind their peers because they choose to honor a rich tradition their families celebrate.

In recent years, we have worked together to recognize holidays for our Muslim neighbors by recognizing Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr, as well as the Lunar New Year that is celebrated in many of our East and Southeast Asian cultures. We cannot leave our Asian Indian communities behind. We must recognize their dignity and officially make Diwali a City-recognized holiday by supporting Resolution 0146-2018.

I want to thank the committee for allowing me to testify on this very important issue.

Thank you for your time and attention.