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**Statement to New York City Planning, Dispositions and Concessions;  
Zoning and Franchises  
City Council Subcommittees Joint Public Hearing  
Columbia University “Manhattanville Expansion Project”  
Wednesday, December 12, 2007: 10:00a.m.**

**Dr. Rafael Lantigua**

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Honorable Council Members, thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts with you. I come before you as a supporter of Columbia University’s proposed expansion plan for a mixed-use academic community, which I have voiced on several occasions.

My name is Dr. Rafael Lantigua and I am a board member of the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights and Professor of Clinical Medicine, Associate Director of the Division of General Medicine at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.

The Columbia University Expansion plan is an important project for New York City and for its future as a global leader in research and education. It is also a critical project for the people of West Harlem and Northern Manhattan in terms of future employment.

For many years, I have worked and fought for the rights of members of the Latino community throughout West Harlem, Washington Heights, and Inwood. During this time, I have seen firsthand the countless benefits that my community has received because of having Columbia University as its neighbor.

As a Columbia University Medical Center Physician, I am very proud to work and teach at a hospital that not only does Nobel Prize-winner research, Columbia happens to also be an important community partner.

For decades, the University has collaborated with local community-based organizations to provide nearly 150 programs that help improve the quality of life in Latino and African American communities. Columbia has also provided funding and other resources for programs that continue to make a difference to the people I work with in Upper Manhattan, including such programs as;

- The Northern Manhattan Start Right Coalition, that serves low-income communities of Harlem and Washington Heights and Inwood with free vaccinations to children ages 6-23 months.
- Columbia also provides free dental care to approximately 3,000 neighborhood children each year throughout Northern Manhattan, as well as providing more than 3,500 students with free eyeglasses through its Center for Community Health and Education.
- In addition, Columbia University Medical Center's commitment to women's health is quite impressive. Through its **Breast Cancer Screening Partnership**, Columbia provides free mammograms, cervical and colorectal screenings, genetic counseling, mental health guidance, and other life-saving preventative health care services to uninsured women over 40 in Upper Manhattan.
- Columbia also provides special scholarships for children who live in Upper Manhattan, including the Dyckman Scholarship, which provides financial support to outstanding students from the Washington Heights/Inwood areas who attend Columbia College. In the current academic year, about 25 undergraduate students from Washington Heights/Inwood are receiving more than \$700,000.

When I consider the large number of community members employed by Columbia University—nearly 30 percent of Columbia staff live in Upper Manhattan—it only bolsters my support of the plan, as the Manhattanville expansion will only increase the number of jobs for members of the community.

Recently, I was very pleased to hear that community concerns about affordable housing and displacement were being listened too and that the University recently announced its commitment to help mitigate those issues, including a large housing fund.

I would like to thank you for your time and please support Columbia's proposal. Our community needs it.