



**Testimony**  
**New York City Council**  
**Committee on Small Business**  
**Jointly with the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing**

**Wednesday, April 29, 2020**

Good afternoon Chair Gjonaj, Chair Cohen, and members of the committees on Small Business and Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing. I am Samara Karasyk, Executive Vice President and Chief Policy Officer at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce is among the largest and most influential business advocacy organizations in New York, having spent the last hundred years developing and promoting policies that drive economic development and advance its members' interests. We are the voice of Brooklyn's business community, offering the promotion, support and advocacy businesses need to continue creating jobs and opportunities in their communities.

Our team at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce has been working around the clock to help our small businesses weather the COVID-19 crisis and offer them the support, tools, and resources that they need to survive. We have seen firsthand how difficult it is for them cover basic expenses such as salaries and rent at a time when many have been mandated to close and others have been forced to pivot to a completely new business model that does not offer them the same amount of revenue. Thank you for taking on this package of bills to help our restaurants, who have been so hard hit by this crisis and forced to transition to a model based solely on delivery and pickup.

In light of the critical function third-party delivery platforms provide to this industry during the pandemic, we support Intro. 1908-A. It is essential that we cap delivery fees at 10% for restaurants to survive at this time. For many restaurants, delivery represented a relatively small percentage of their revenue stream prior to COVID-19; they need to hold onto every dollar they can to stay in business. Even for restaurants accustomed to doing more delivery, revenue is down, expenses are up, and they also desperately need financial assistance. Furthermore, we support providing more transparency to customers on third-party delivery platforms as described in a number of the bills being heard today; specifically, including restaurant letter grades (Intro.1921), disclosing commissions/fees (Intro.1896), and gratuity policies (Intro. 1846). The Brooklyn Chamber also supports Intro.1897, requiring that third-party delivery platforms are licensed to ensure they comply with regulations that support our local businesses. We are concerned that Intro. 1895 could result in additional expenses for restaurants and delivery workers but would like to work with Council on other ways to reassure customers that restaurants and the frontline workers making deliveries are providing safe and sanitary consumables so that New Yorkers feel comfortable ordering in and supporting our local businesses.



In addition, we support Intro. 1916, waiving and refunding all fees for sidewalk cafes to help our restaurants weather this pandemic.

Although we support many of the bills being heard today, we are troubled by the potential unintended consequences of Intro. 1932. At a time when every business has been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, we are afraid that Intro. 1932 could prevent landlords from having any ability to engage with bad actors to work out a sensible plan for them to pay their rent. Specifically, this legislation places undue harm on malls because customers require a vibrant retail hub to travel to these destinations and shopping centers are highly motivated to keep their storefronts occupied – but this prevents them from having any ability to enforce against a bad tenant.

Before closing, it is important to offer a note of caution. Many of our local businesses have already closed. We are not sure how many of them will be able to re-open. Even essential businesses have been impacted by this unprecedented crisis. These enterprises cannot absorb any additional fees, taxes, or fines. It is imperative that the New York City Council work with our business community to save our local economy and pause any legislation that increases their financial burdens at this time. We look forward to working with you to save as many of our small businesses as we can and bring them back to life – our communities and neighborhoods cannot survive without them.

Thank you for your consideration and for your support of New York City's small businesses.