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February 4, 2020

Hon. Corey Johnson
Speaker, New York City Council
City Hall Office
New York, NY 10007

Re: Passage of Introduction 1609-2019 and Introduction 1622-2019

Dear Speaker Johnson:

I write in support of Introduction 1609-2019 and Introduction 1622-2019. Intro. 1609-2019 would rename the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs to the New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, and Intro. 1622-2019 updates the New York City's Consumer Protection Law.

Since 2014, when City Council passed legislation expanding New York City's Paid Sick Leave Law, the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) has served as the City's central hub for labor issues and workers' rights. The agency has taken tremendous steps to provide workers with paid leave, fair scheduling practices, and right to payment and ensures that our most vulnerable workers, including paid care workers, have an amplified voice and government advocate.

Intro. 1609 amends the City Charter to rename the Department of Consumer Affairs the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) in order to reflect its expanded mission. The legislation also makes additional amendments to ensure the renamed agency has the appropriate enforcement and compliance tools to secure restitution and equitable relief for New Yorkers.

New York City's Consumer Protection Law provides fundamental protection against unfair, unconscionable and deceptive practices in the marketplace. Since its passage in 1969, it has been used to secure settlements and decisions that benefit some of the city's most vulnerable communities, including low-income and immigrant New Yorkers.

However, the Consumer Protection Law has not been updated since 1969 and requires several amendments to ensure that the Agency's authority is clarified and reflective of the modern marketplace. Among the updates that Intro. 1622-2019 would make to the Consumer Protection Law are:

- Clarifying the Agency's ability to seek and secure restitution in cases implicating the Consumer Protection Law before the Office of Administrative Trial and Hearings (OATH).
- Updating penalties to adjust for inflation so that it is a more effective deterrent to unlawful behavior.
- Clarifying that deceptive trade practices include a businesses' failure to provide translated documents to a consumer if a transaction was primarily negotiated in a language other than English.
- Clarifying that the law applies to different types of communication through which businesses today often engage with consumers – such as digital and electronic media.

Now more than ever, New Yorkers need its City to safeguard their rights. Together, Intro. 1609 and Intro. 1622 bring about vital reforms which will ensure the Department of Consumer Affairs is empowered in its mission to serve as a robust advocate and defender of workers' and consumers' rights.

I urge you to support and advocate for passage of these important bills.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruben Diaz Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ruben Diaz Jr.