

TESTIMONY BY

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

RACHEL VAN TOSH

NEW YORK CITY

DEPARTMENT OF SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2016

Good afternoon Chairman Cornegy and members of the Committee on Small Business. My name is Rachel Van Tosh and I am a Deputy Commissioner at the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Intro. 891. At SBS, part of our core mission is to help create stronger businesses and grow the number of jobs available to New Yorkers. We are addressing access to the information businesses need to operate and stay compliant through proactive education and outreach. We appreciate the Council's partnership in these efforts and would like to take this opportunity to tell you more about how we help small businesses stay compliant and help their communities thrive.

One of the ways SBS is currently accomplishing this is through the implementation of **Small Business First (SB1)**. Under the leadership of Mayor de Blasio, SBS, in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Operations and 15 City agencies, launched Small Business First in February 2015. The goal of Small Business First is to reduce the regulatory burden on small businesses. Since the implementation of Small Business First, the City has made it easier for small businesses to resolve City-issued violations online and by phone and email, which allows businesses to focus their time on running their business. More than 600 City-issued violations have been resolved since February through SB1. SBS has also begun deploying Compliance Advisors, a new type of City employee who has a range of technical expertise across several regulatory City agencies. Compliance Advisors visit small businesses in person and provide guidance on how to fix or prevent common issues.

SBS is also working with the Mayor's Office of Data Analytics (MODA) to compile and analyze information, including data on the types of violations issued by the City, to conduct outreach in the areas of the city where businesses need the most help. This localized support will include direct one-on-one engagement with business owners by City staff with expertise in

compliance; the scheduling of informational events in business owners' neighborhoods so they can speak directly with City staff; and the creation of plain language informational guides – all with the goal of helping small businesses better understand City regulations.

With the Council's support, under the leadership of Chair Cornegy, SBS worked with the Chambers of Commerce in all five boroughs to develop Chamber on the Go. Through this initiative, teams from SBS and the Chambers make door-to-door visits to businesses to speak about SBS services including legal, financial and M/WBE certification assistance. To date, we've reached over 1,300 businesses to tell them about resources available.

SBS' network of seven **NYC Business Solutions Centers** and seven **Industrial Business Service Providers (IBSPs)** offers a wide range of free, high-quality services and courses that help strengthen businesses. To better serve immigrant entrepreneurs through our programs, SBS has increased the number of non-English business courses offered at our Centers by providing instruction in eight languages. Through our Immigrant Business Initiative (IBI), SBS works to better serve immigrant small businesses by partnering with community-based organizations to develop on-the-ground solutions. Last year our Immigrant Business Initiative partners served nearly 1,500 small business owners and entrepreneurs, over 90% of which came from low-to-moderate income communities.

SBS is committed to providing businesses with the information and tools they need to be compliant, be good neighbors and to grow and thrive in New York City.

Thank you and now I would be happy to take your questions.



May 4th, 2016

Written testimony respectfully submitted to the NYC Council Committee on Small Business by Melissa Chapman, Senior Vice President for Public Affairs at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, in support of Int. No. 891.

**Hon. Robert E. Cornegy, Jr., Chair
NYC Council Committee on Small Business**

Good Afternoon Chair Cornegy, other committee members and guests. I'm Melissa Chapman, Senior Vice President for Public Affairs at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce (BCC.) This testimony is being delivered on behalf of Carlo A. Scissura, President and CEO of BCC.

BCC is a membership-based, business assistance organization that represents the interests of over 2,200 member businesses, as well as other businesses across the borough of Brooklyn. The Brooklyn Alliance is the not-for-profit, economic development organization of BCC, which works to address the needs of businesses through direct assistance programs.

As the voice of the Brooklyn business community, we strongly support the legislation being proposed today, because it will enhance transparency, and in so doing, provide businesses with opportunities to cure issues, instead of being subjected to ongoing fines and fees.

This proposal will be very helpful to small businesses – the backbone of a healthy economy. As it stands, business owners are being inundated with fines and fees from various city agencies, and when combined, these hurdles can really take away from valuable resources needed to operate a business.

Int. No. 891. will empower business owners to effectively manage their establishments by being able to register online to receive notifications and stating their preference of having the complaint communicated to them 72 hours after it is received via the 311 system.

As an enhancement, it may also be helpful for the business owner to be able to choose the language in which they would like to receive notifications, given New York's diverse population. In addition, part of the initial correspondence should also include steps that the business owner should take to cure any violations related to the complaint.

On that note, BCC supports the recommendation in Comptroller Scott Stringer's 2016 red tape report titled '60 Ways to Cut Red Tape and Help Small Businesses Grow,' where it suggests that the city should establish a team of small business liaisons within the 311 system. Ideally, this group of individuals would support businesses by reaching out to owners who have had complaints lodged against them, and directly working with the owners to correct issues by connecting them to appropriate officials within the various city agencies.

We applaud the NYC Council Committee on Small Business for holding this hearing, and for giving us the opportunity to testify in this matter.

May 4th, 2016

New York City Hospitality Alliance

Comments on the

Int. No. 891 - In relation to notifying a business when the city has received a complaint about its operation.

The New York City Hospitality Alliance is a not-for-profit membership association representing thousands of restaurants and nightlife establishments throughout the five boroughs. Int. No. 891 - In relation to notifying a business when the city has received a complaint about its operation, while well intentioned, will impact our members and therefore we submit the following comments:

- 311 complaints transmitted to a business should contain certain descriptive information about the complainant. This information will allow a business to take corrective action and eliminate the alleged problem. For example, a bar business should be told if a noise complaint is made by a resident who lives upstairs, across the street, or a passerby. If an upstairs neighbor due to loud music files the noise complaint then the bar can take sound proofing measures. Without being provided such descriptive information about the complainant, it may be impossible for a business to address the complaint.
- 311 complaints transmitted to the business owners should specify if there are multiple different people complaining or if a single person is complaining multiple times. There may be five calls to 311 for example, but there is a big difference between one person calling five times vs. five people calling.
- Whenever possible, 311 complaints should be transmitted to the business in real time (not “within 72 hours”) so it has the opportunity to address the complaint while it exists.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Rigie
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NYC Hospitality Alliance
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Robert Bookman
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Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

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I represent: DEP

Address: _____

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Name: JOHN CURRY

Address: Asst. Comm. Legal Affairs / Dep. GC

I represent: Business Integrity Commission

Address: (BIC)

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Name: Nicholas Smithberg (PLEASE PRINT)

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I represent: Exec. Dir. - OCA

Address: Sick Leave

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Name: Supervising Inspector Richard Roche (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: A Metro Tech Center Brooklyn

I represent: New York City Fire Department

Address: _____

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Date: 5/4

Name: JOSEPH MORRISON - 311 (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 59 MAIDEN LANE 10038

I represent: NYC 311

Address: 59 MAIDEN LANE 10038

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Melissa Chepman

Address: 335 Adams St., Ste. 2700, Brooklyn, NY 11201

I represent: Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

Address: _____

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Name: Rachel Van Tosh

Address: 110 William Street NY

I represent: NYC Dept. Small Biz Services

Address: _____

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