

**Testimony of Deputy Commissioner Carlos A. Ortiz
New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection**

**Before the Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection
Hearing on Introductions 495, 1016, 1231, 1290, 1308, 1311**

June 17, 2025

Introduction

Good morning, Chair Menin, and members of the Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection. My name is Carlos Ortiz, I am the Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs at the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP). Today, I am joined by our Associate General Counsel, Andrew Schwenk. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the committee today on these bills regarding our consumer protection work.

Protecting New Yorkers

DCWP is a key resource for all New Yorkers, providing fundamental consumer and worker protections, and financial empowerment programming across the five boroughs. We are dedicated to ensuring that consumers who have been exploited or deceived have a recourse, that workers have a passionate defender of their rights, and that all New Yorkers have the support they need to improve their financial health. These protections and resources are available to all New Yorkers regardless of immigration status. In the past three years under Commissioner Mayuga's tenure, we have delivered more than \$1.3 billion back to New Yorkers through our protections, policies, and programming.

Since our landmark Consumer Protection Law was enacted in 1969, we have been the nation's leading municipal consumer protection agency. For nearly sixty years, we have consistently leveraged our authority to protect New Yorkers from deceptive business practices, securing financial restitution for consumers whose rights have been violated by bad actors in the marketplace. In the last few years, our efforts have played a role in the recovery of about \$28 million in financial restitution and debt relief for consumers.

A key component of protecting New Yorkers is supporting and facilitating compliance amongst businesses with the laws that we enforce through education and other key services. DCWP's licensure plays a critical role in safeguarding our consumers and maintaining industry standards across more than 45,000 businesses in 40 license categories. Businesses across the five boroughs have access to our educational materials, as well as direct outreach from our team. In the last several years, we have hosted nearly 400 business engagement and outreach events, reaching more than 30,000 business owners. Our Visiting Inspector Program provides new brick and mortar businesses that we regulate the opportunity to receive an educational visit from one of our inspectors. We look forward to working with the Council to streamline compliance, reduce costs, and highlight our balanced approach to support small businesses while still providing robust consumer protections for all New Yorkers.

Introduction 1290

Turning to today's legislation, Introduction 1290 would require licensing of self-storage warehouses. We strongly support the council's efforts to expand our licensing to a key sector of the storage industry, from which we frequently receive consumer complaints.

Introduction 495

Introduction 495 would limit increases of occupancy fees for self-storage facilities by no more than an increase of 2 percent per year. In addition, self-storage facilities would not be permitted to terminate occupancies for any reason other than non-payment of fees. As drafted, this legislation may unintentionally discourage self-storage companies from renewing occupancy agreements with existing customers. We recommend a required rate disclosure to be provided to consumers ahead of time in the event of an increase, similar to what exists in our parking lot and garage category, where rate increases must be communicated to consumers and to DCWP at least 60 days in advance of implementation. Strong pricing disclosures would work well with the expanded licensing requirements proposed in Introduction 1290.

Introduction 1231

Introduction 1231 would require tax preparers to provide customers with an itemized statement of charges, which would have to be provided in both a physical and electronic format. We support this legislation, which will increase transparency in the paid tax preparer industry and help protect consumers—particularly lower-income New Yorkers—as we look ahead to the next tax season.

Introduction 1311

Introduction 1311 would prohibit food establishments from using a dynamic pricing model that increases the price of any menu item based on real-time demand. We support the intent of the bill. Dynamic pricing is a relatively new consumer protection issue, particularly for brick-and-mortar businesses like restaurants. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Council and stakeholders to better understand the scope and impact of this practice on New Yorkers and to refine the legislation accordingly.

Introduction 1308

Introduction 1308 would reform many of the city's business licensing laws. We strongly support this bill as a commonsense reform that will benefit many business categories and deliver meaningful savings for small businesses. The legislation would streamline onerous requirements and is another step to provide a more efficient system for all New Yorkers.

We would like to recommend for the legislative record and redlining process that additional measures be added within the framework of the legislation to reduce operational hurdles for businesses. For example, this bill eliminates onerous fingerprinting requirements for many of our license categories. We believe that requirement should also be removed for the merged electronics store category. Ultimately, we believe that the fingerprinting requirement is not only burdensome, but it also hinders prospective small businesses from being able to participate in the market and it does not create greater protection for the consumers. ~~We think the bond requirement should be removed for all secondhand dealers, especially~~ where it is duplicative of state requirements. We agree with the Council that licenses in good standing, compliant with local laws and rules, should be able to move locations within a community district. Currently, the bill permits this for electronic cigarette retailers, but we believe this should also be allowed for tobacco retailers. We also recommend an online sales exemption for secondhand dealer licensees, and eliminating outdated manufacturer and qualifications provisions in our locksmiths category. Lastly, while the current requirement to audit process servers is overly burdensome on these businesses, we believe we should retain discretion to be able to conduct an audit when necessary.

Introduction 1016

Finally, Introduction 1016 would require dealers in firearms, rifles, and shotguns to display a warning sign where the firearms, rifles, or shotguns are displayed or where they are transferred to the purchaser. The Administration has submitted written testimony for this bill. We defer to our colleagues at DOHMH and NYPD on this legislation.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee on our essential work uplifting New Yorkers and today's legislation. We look forward to working with you all to further our efforts to protect New Yorkers in the marketplace. I welcome any questions you may have for further discussion.



121 State Street, Albany, NY 12207 · (518) 431-1106 · nyselfstorage.org

NYC Council
Committee on Consumer Protection Hearing
6/17/25

Thank you, Chair Menin, and Council Members for the opportunity to testify today. My name is James Coakley and I serve on the Board of the New York State Self Storage Association, which provides educational services and conferences that emphasize best practices for storage operators that focus on providing the best possible customer experience. There are approximately 250 self-storage facilities in New York City throughout all 5 boroughs, equating to about 25 million sq ft. In a City of 8.5M people, that is just under 3 sq ft of storage per person. That number is far below most other cities, and far off of the national average of 8 sq ft per person.

The self-storage industry supports communities with affordable rental rates during times of crisis, such as fires, earthquakes, hurricanes, and pandemics, among others. Self-storage is a community-supportive industry that engages through hyperlocal food drives, donation drives, fundraisers, giveaways, and other programs aimed at meeting the needs of local communities.

Storage operators have been adopting improving customer service with technology, making operations easier and more it transparent for customers. There are online tools, after-hours call centers, mobile apps, just to name a few.

We would like to share some concerns we have about 2 bills on the agenda today:

Intro 1290

The proposed Bill seems to be contradicting certain points in the State Statute and seems to be adding other points that are duplicative with the Statute. This would be challenging for storage operators to interpret and ultimately to comply with.

The bill seems unclear in its language about the ability to store household goods only and not business materials. We have many small business customers who use our facilities to store files, marketing materials, or inventory for use in their primary. I want to make it clear that Self storage facilities do not accept goods. Our business model is self-

service storage where the customer (or a moving company they hire) puts their own property in the storage space.

There is also lack of clarity about what gets licensed, the operator or the facility. So if my company has 7 facilities in NYC, do I need 7 licenses? All of our buildings are required to have a Certificate of Occupancy issued by the City of NY. We need multiple City agency approvals including the FDNY, DOB and more. We have annual Fire Alarm and Sprinkler Inspections. We have to comply with various other building Local Laws. It is unclear what the added licensing requirement achieves.

Section 20-480: Insurance

The storage warehouse operator should not be required to offer insurance to each customer. Requiring operator insurance would remove consumer choices, and could infringe on privacy issues for the consumer. That should be the operator's choice to offer it. This is a business decision that should be left to each individual storage operator.

How would the commissioner set a minimum level by which the goods need to be insured? If a customer decides to use a homeowner's policy or renter's policy (which is fairly common in NYC), how would storage operator police this to ensure the customer was meeting the minimums? Why can't a consumer decide they don't want to insure the goods? If a business is storing files, there is no commercial value to those, they might opt not to insure them.

Section 182 of the NYS Lien law already provides language for increasing the value of the property stored. There is no need for the City to provide additional language.

Section 20-481: Form Contract

NYSSA is opposed to this requirement. Section 182 of the NYS Lien Law provides very specific language that needs to be included in the contract ("Occupancy Agreement"). There are many self-storage operators that have facilities in NYC and outside of NYC. Why would they need to have separate agreements, if they already meet the State requirements?

Likewise we have concerns about Intro 495:

Price controls are not appropriate for the self-storage industry because our business is built around a month-to-month lease structure, offering the customer the ultimate level of flexibility. They can start and stop whenever they would like. Rental agreements do not require a security deposit or credit check, making the service available to anyone

over the age of 18. Customers only pay for the space they rent. There are no additional pass-thru charges for property taxes, maintenance and repairs, or utilities costs, etc.

The industry's short-term lease structure is a built-in consumer safeguard that longer-term residential leases do not offer. Month-to-month renewal flexibility serves as a de facto price control because customers can easily leave. As a result, operators are incentivized to maintain competitive prices that ultimately benefit the consumer.

Additionally, limiting storage agreement terminations for non-payment is harmful to storage operators. Unfortunately, there are times when customer is not following the rules of the storage facility, are engaged in illegal activity, and are disruptive or harmful to other customers in the facility. The storage operator has to have the right to terminate the storage agreement in these cases. This is a process that is not entered into very lightly. Once the agreement is terminated, so is the operator's lien sale rights. That means the process has to go through the NYC court system which is extremely lengthy and expensive.

The Association fails to see the systemic need for these legislative solutions and urges the Council and Administration to consider consumer choice and flexibility when working through these bills.

Self-storage offers affordable, flexible, and convenient solutions for consumers and small businesses in need of short and long-term solutions. Small businesses make up 20 – 25% of self-storage customers on average.

Industry-wide customer satisfaction is very high -- operators consistently achieve 95-98% positive Google and Yelp reviews. Accordingly, there is no existing study or report that documents a problem that needs to be addressed.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns and look forward to engaging on these bills. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

James Coakley
New York Self Storage Association
Member – Board of Directors

Testimony in Support of Proposed Local Law on Firearm Warning Signs

Submitted by: Husein Yatabarry, Executive Director

Muslim Community Network (MCN)

NYC Council Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection

Hearing Date: Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Committee,

My name is Husein Yatabarry, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Muslim Community Network (MCN), an organization committed to advancing the safety, well-being, and civic empowerment of New York City's diverse Muslim communities.

I am here today to express **MCN's strong support** for the proposed local law requiring licensed dealers of firearms, rifles, and shotguns to post visible, evidence-based warnings about the dangers of gun ownership. This bill is a critical and overdue step toward improving public health and safety in our city.

Gun violence is a public health crisis—one that disproportionately harms marginalized communities, including Muslim New Yorkers. In just the past few years, we've lost young Muslim lives to firearms, leaving families devastated and communities reeling. The trauma doesn't end with a headline; it lingers in classrooms, masjids, and homes.

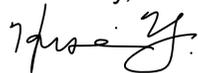
This legislation speaks to a simple truth: **a firearm in the home increases the risk of suicide, domestic violence fatalities, and unintentional deaths—especially among children.** These are not abstract risks. These are daily, lived realities for New Yorkers.

The required warning—paired with graphic images and mental health resources—is an essential tool for **informed consumer decision-making**, and a critical moment of intervention for someone who may be on the edge of crisis. The inclusion of hotline numbers and the reference to the NYC Mobile Crisis Team and the National Suicide Hotline is especially important, providing life-saving pathways to support at a moment of potential danger.

Let me be clear: gun violence is a cancer in our communities, and it's growing. If we are serious about prevention, then we must start where access begins—with transparency, education, and truth. This bill does exactly that.

We urge the Council to pass this legislation swiftly, and we thank you for taking leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,



Husein Yatabarry

Executive Director

Muslim Community Network

husein@mcnny.org



Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection With Regards to Intro No 1308

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Good Morning, Chair Menin and Members of the Committee.

On behalf of Savers Value Village, it is a pleasure to join you virtually this morning. I am James Allen, Director of Government Affairs & Sustainability. In addition to providing this testimony, I am happy to answer any questions that you may have today.

By way of background, Savers Value Village is a publicly traded thrift retail company on the New York Stock Exchange that partners with nonprofit organizations to offer outstanding value to consumers, unrestricted revenue to charities who serve the local community, job opportunities at competitive wages and benefits, associated city and state tax base, as well as the diversion of billions of pounds of reusable material from landfills.

We currently operate more than 353 retail locations across the U.S., Canada, and Australia (including nine locations in other parts of New York State) and would like to bring our business to New York City.

Unfortunately, there are a number of provisions within New York City Administrative Code, Title 20, Chapter 2: Licenses, Subchapter 11: Dealers in Second-Hand Articles (the “Code”), regulating the methods of purchase and sale of certain used goods, which prevents us from doing so.

The Legislation

We are encouraged that the Committee is considering changes to the Code through *Int No. 1308 – in relation to reforming certain business licensing requirements*, which would allow us, as well as nonprofit thrift stores, to expand into New York City, bringing our economic and environmental benefits to communities across the five boroughs.

The Plain Language Summary for Intro 1308 states that, “...the fingerprinting requirement would... be eliminated for ... dealers in secondhand goods (other than automobile dealers). Secondhand clothing dealers and distributors for general vendors would no longer be required to be licensed . . . dealers in secondhand goods (other than automobile dealers) . . . would no longer be required to be bonded.”

The stated intent - no longer requiring secondhand clothing dealers and distributors for general vendors to be licensed as secondhand dealers - would make it possible for us to open in New York City, which we are eager to do. However, the proposed text itself does not expressly state that a Secondhand Dealers License would not be required for a business like ours.

Under the Code’s current provisions, Subchapter 11, Section 20-264 lists a few categories of goods whose sale is not subject to the various requirements of the Code.

Section 1 § 6 of the proposed legislation would add certain categories to the list of items that are not currently subject to the Code, such as clothing, shoes, and footwear. While we appreciate the legislation’s move to expand the list of goods not currently subject to the Code’s requirements, our thrift stores offer

many other categories of secondhand consumer items, including accessories, toys, kitchenware, bed and bath items, small appliances, and more. In order to open new stores in New York City, we would need assurance that our entire business would be Code compliant, which would dictate a broader allowance in the Code for the categories of goods that would be exempt from a Secondhand Dealers License.

Proposed Amendment

In order to enable us to open stores in New York City, we respectfully propose an amendment to Section 1 § 6 of the legislation that would allow us to operate with confidence, as follows (with our amendment language appearing below in green):

§ 6. Paragraph 1 of subdivision b of section 20-264 of the administrative code of the city of New York, as added by chapter 907 of the laws of 1985, is amended to read as follows:

1. Pianos, books, magazines, rugs, tapestries, artists' burlaps, painting, sculpture, drawings, etchings, [and] engravings, clothing, shoes, footwear, and other apparel, and other secondhand items primarily received by the seller by way of donation or otherwise not purchased from individual consumers.

At a high level, the Code appears designed to prevent the easy exchange of stolen property. However, this is not an issue at a thrift store as the items are primarily donated rather than purchased from individual sellers, like a pawn or consignment shop, for which licenses would still be required. To be clear, we do not purchase items from the public; we accept donated goods on behalf of nonprofit partners and pay our nonprofit partners for those goods.

While it is our hope that the above amendment will be adopted, should the legislation not include language that would expressly exempt us from requiring a Secondhand Dealers License, there are certain provisions within Subchapter 11 that make it impossible for us to operate in New York City. If these individual provisions were to be repealed, or amended to reflect only certain, other types of businesses, we would be able to comply with the Secondhand Dealers License requirement, specifically:

1) Section 20-266's bonding and fingerprinting requirements.

Unlike pawn shops and consignment shops, Savers does not buy items from individuals. Rather, we accept miscellaneous donations in bulk on behalf of our nonprofit partners as a registered commercial fundraiser with the State of New York.

In addition, our average price point is very low. During the fiscal year 2024, average unit retail ("AUR") price was approximately \$5.

Consequently, there is no risk that someone would steal a valuable item and donate it to our nonprofit partner. There simply is no financial incentive to traffic stolen property through our business model.

2) **Section 20-273's many requirements to make detailed recordings related to consumer information.**

This provision is an absolute barrier to our being able to operate in New York City. In fiscal year 2024, our average store processed nearly 34,000 unique items per week that arrive at our doors in bulk donation bags and boxes. It would be impossible to itemize information related to the origin of each item and who donated it to our nonprofit partner in a large bag of other items. It would similarly be impossible from a logistical point of view (including that it would frustrate our customers) to record this type of personal information related to which customers bought which items at an average unit retail price of approximately \$5.

Similarly, the volume of items we process would make it impossible to comply with provisions in **Section 20-272**. Other provisions, such as **Section 20-268's** holding period for certain items and **Section 20-270 and 271's** signage and labeling requirements, would impose varying levels of logistical challenge on our operations.

Background and Impact

Again, Savers Value Village is a publicly traded thrift retail company on the New York Stock Exchange that partners with nonprofit organizations to offer outstanding value to consumers, significant community benefits, and the diversion of billions of pounds of reusable material from landfills.

At our more than 353 retail locations across the U.S., Canada, and Australia (including nine locations in other parts of New York State), Savers partners with local nonprofit organizations to supply the majority of items for sale in our thrift stores. As a registered professional fundraiser with the New York Office of the Attorney General, we accept donations of clothing and household goods on behalf of our nonprofit partners at our Community Donation Centers located at the side or back of our Savers stores. We then purchase these donations in bulk from our nonprofit partners, providing them with unrestricted revenue for their missions.

We diverted more than **3.2 billion pounds** of secondhand items from the waste stream over a recent five-year period (2020-2024) and paid our nonprofit partners more than **\$490 million** for donations of reusable goods during that same time period.

Not only is our business model rooted in sustainability and community, each new store can be expected to create approximately 40-55 jobs. We seek to hire our team members locally, offer a strong benefits package (including bundled health plans with health, dental, and vision coverage; company-paid life insurance; a 401(k) plan with company matching; paid time off; and a range of mental health resources), have a strong culture of promotion from within, and offer an in-house training program.

The Sage Policy Group studied Savers' economic and environmental impacts in Maryland for 2022. Based on its findings, Sage concluded that, while impacts may vary by location and state, each new U.S. Savers location could be expected to:

- Create direct and secondary jobs through multiplier effects.
- Make substantial payments to local nonprofit partners.

- Divert roughly 2,000 tons of solid waste from the local waste stream each year; producing an equivalent amount of fiber would generate 7,000 tons of CO₂-eq, an amount equal to the annual CO₂ output of 1,400 average passenger cars each year.
- Reduce the burden on local waste management services, putting money back in the pockets of taxpayers.

With assurance that our business model may operate and bring its many community benefits to New York City without the onerous, outdated and unnecessary burdens of the Code, we look forward to joining your community.

I am happy to answer your questions and provide any additional information that would be helpful to the Committee.

Thank you for your consideration of our business model and perspectives on this important issue.

Respectfully submitted,



James Allen
Director of Government Affairs & Sustainability

Getting Out and Staying Out Testimony DRAFT Intro 1016

Hello, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Pat Grace, Program Manager at Getting Out and Staying Out, a reentry and anti-violence program that has served more than 15,000 people over two decades.

- At GOSO, we work directly with 16-24-year-old young people who are incarcerated in Rikers Island, in juvenile facilities, people in the community who have been directly impacted by the criminal justice system and those who are at risk.
- I work with GOSO's Cure Violence program SAVE. In 2024 we did **269 violence interruptions** and **102 mediations**, held **21 events**, and connected **41 participants** to GOSO's supportive services.
- This work, combined with GOSO's community-based education, mental health, job readiness and paid internship programs, has reduced gun violence and led to better outcomes for the young people we serve. While gun violence is still a serious problem in our community, we are proud to say that the area in East Harlem that we serve has seen gun violence drop to the lowest level since 2019.
- A key part of anti-violence work is education to our community about the dangers of gun violence. Public service messages like the ones in this legislation, which warns against the dangers of gun violence, will bolster these efforts. It is a fact that owning guns can have negative consequences and owning a firearm in the home increases the chances of serious harm and even death. It is important that guns, just like other potentially dangerous items available for sale, come with a warning.
- Treating gun violence like a public health epidemic is key to what we do, and that includes spreading positive norms and changing negative behaviors. That effort must be supported by public education efforts like the one proposed in this legislation. We support Intro 1016 and requiring consumer warnings for guns where they are available for sale.

More Info on Hearing

[The New York City Council - Meeting of Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection on 6/17/2025 at 10:00 AM](#)

Testimony of Zafar Ahmed

Before the New York City Council: Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection

Re: Intro 1308 and the Urgent Need to Include Cigarette and Tobacco License Transfers

Good afternoon, Members of the City Council,

My name is Zafar Ahmed, and I am a 68-year-old small business owner on the Upper East Side. For the past 28 years, I have proudly operated International News and Magazines Inc. at 302 East 86th Street, a corner store and community hub that has served generations of New Yorkers with newspapers, magazines, everyday essentials, and legally licensed tobacco and electronic cigarette products.

I've kept my doors open through snowstorms, blackouts, subway construction, and even the pandemic. Every single day, I've shown up because I believe in this neighborhood and the people who make it special.

However, after nearly three decades of service, I am being forced to close, not because of anything I did wrong, but because my building has been sold to a developer who plans to demolish it to build a luxury condo tower. I have until June 30, 2025, to vacate the space I have served our community from for decades.

I've identified another storefront just a few blocks away, still within the neighborhood I've called home for nearly 30 years. I'm ready to relocate, restock, and continue doing what I've always done: serve my customers. There is one obstacle I cannot overcome alone, though. New York City will not allow me to transfer my retail licenses for tobacco and vape products to the new location. And under current rules, the city is not issuing new licenses either. This means I cannot continue my business.

Without these permits, not only would I lose my entire livelihood, but I would also lose tens of thousands of dollars in unsellable inventory and be forced to lay off employees who depend on this store to support their families. Our loyal customers, especially seniors, would lose access to a store that's been a reliable part of their daily routine for decades.

This is not just my problem. Across the city, small businesses are being pushed out, not by bad business practices, but by rising rents, aggressive developers, and ineffective and inflexible government bureaucracy. The current regulations give us no path forward. When our leases end, our buildings are sold, or we have to relocate due to fire or flood, we are effectively shut down by this policy that does not have the best interests of small business owners at heart.

In response to this crisis, over 1,150 community members, including many long-time residents and senior citizens, have signed a petition calling on the Council to act with urgency on this

matter. They don't want to lose this store. They don't want to lose the community connection. They want us to stay.

Council Member Menin has introduced Intro 1308, which seeks to allow for the transfer of electronic cigarette licenses when a small business is forced to move. This is an important step. However, as written, the bill does not include traditional cigarette and tobacco licenses, which are a core part of my business and many others like mine.

If this legislation is truly meant to protect small businesses from unfair closures, it must reflect the full reality of what we sell and who we serve. Without including traditional tobacco licenses, this bill only partially addresses the crisis, and businesses like mine will still be forced to close. That's why I respectfully urge you to amend Intro 1308 to allow for the transfer or reissuance of all retail tobacco licenses – including both cigarettes and electronic cigarettes – when a business must relocate due to circumstances beyond their control, such as a lease expiration, building sale, demolition, fire, or natural disaster.

This is not a request to expand tobacco access. It's a request to protect long-standing, law-abiding small businesses from being wiped out by inflexible policies and bureaucratic gaps.

I've paid every tax. I've followed every rule. I've earned the trust of my community. All I ask is for the chance to keep serving them. This Council has an opportunity to ensure that laws designed to support small businesses don't end up erasing us instead.

Please act with urgency and compassion. Amend the bill. Give small businesses like mine a fair path forward. And let the people of this city continue to support the places that have always supported them.

Respectfully,

Zafar Ahmed
Owner, International News and Magazines Inc.

████████████████████
██

 [Petition Link – www.change.org/ProtectUESBiz](http://www.change.org/ProtectUESBiz)

June 17, 2025

Good Afternoon, my name is Alison O Jordan and I am here to share my reasons for supporting Resolution 362-A and in support of the Social Work Workforce Act. I am a licensed social worker, LMSW and LCSW. I graduated from the Hunter College School of Social Work and began my career as a Program Director in NYC's largest senior center.

I have extensive experience in public health and correctional health services and retired from the City of New York after 39 years. I now provide technical assistance on national models of care for people re-entering from incarceration, and volunteer on many national organizations related to correctional health care.

Over the course of my career, I have mentored dozens of social work students and interns, early career professionals and encouraged many to enter the field of social work, primarily Black and brown social work students. Then one day, we need to have the talk – and tell our mentees that in order to pass the exam, you need to “think like a white woman – afraid of Black and brown men, and take the exam through that lens.” Those who find a way to pass, often after many tries, ignore best practices, and their values, take expensive prep courses, and spend significant amounts of money to pass. White women pass the exam. People of color do not.

We know that the exam is unnecessary and indeed detrimental to the profession. It was waived for those with experience and supervisors who would attest to their abilities. Today the LMSW exam is doing a disservice. It is a barrier to access to social work services that needs to be removed in order for our profession to serve those most in need in the City of New York. People incarcerated are overwhelmingly Black and brown. Those most in need due to socioeconomic status are Black and brown. Social workers who reflect their experience matters to people receiving social work services. It matters to the profession. It matters to all of us.

I submit this testimony in support of the Resolution submitted by Council Member Bottcher, and the Social Work Workforce Act as sponsored by Senator Brouk and Assemblymember Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas. Thank you for your time.

Public Testimony in Support of Amending Intro 1308

Submitted: Collin Thompson

Dear Members of the City Council Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection,

I'm writing today to urge you to support and strengthen Intro 1308 by including provisions that allow for the transfer or reissuance of traditional cigarette and tobacco licenses, not just electronic cigarette licenses, when small businesses are forced to relocate.

I do so on behalf of Zafar Ahmed, a 68-year-old small business owner who has operated International News and Magazines on East 86th Street for 28 years. Zafar's store is more than a business; it's a neighborhood institution. It's where seniors pick up their morning papers, where longtime customers stop in for a familiar face, and where a sense of community is built day in and day out.

Zafar is now being forced out of his location due to a development project. He wants nothing more than to reopen nearby and continue serving the community he's supported for decades. But under current law, he can't transfer his existing licenses, and can't get new ones. That means his business, livelihood, the livelihood of his employees, and the needs of his loyal customers are all at risk.

More than 1,300 people have signed a petition to keep his store alive. That should speak volumes. This isn't about expanding tobacco access. It's about fairness. It's about protecting longtime, law-abiding small business owners from being shut down by overregulation.

If Intro 1308 is meant to help small businesses, it must include all of them. Please amend the bill and give owners like Zafar a fighting chance to stay in the neighborhoods they've helped build.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Collin Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Collin Thompson
Upper East Side Resident

SHARON HER

Brooklyn, NY 11203

June 18, 2025

New York City Council
City Hall Park
New York, NY 10007
Re: Resolution 362-A Supporting the Social Work Workforce Act

Dear Council Members and General Welfare Committee members,

Thank you for your time and for listening to my testimony.

I am a Hmong American who was born in Laos, raised in the United States and has lived in New York City for over 23 years. My father helped the CIA in the fight against communism in Laos during the Vietnam War. As refugees in the USA, my father taught me that in America, we not only had the chance but the obligation to learn, grow, and give back.

Following his example, I have worked and volunteered in the community my entire life; I taught Sunday School for over 10 years, conducted writing workshops at my local library in Flatbush Brooklyn, and I co-created and led Hmong NYC, a thriving network of young professionals. I have actively given my time freely to create a better community because I want the same thing you do, a better world for everyone.

Now, at the age of 51, I want to serve the world in a different capacity, by becoming a Social Worker. Although he passed in 2020, my father's message is forever instilled in me: learning, growing, and giving never stops. Although I understand the time, dedication and cost for school will be high, I know it will be worth it because I see the great need in my community.

However, my understanding is that the ASWB exam, which is required to practice in New York, is extremely expensive, difficult to pass and racially biased. I have met and spoken with many Social Worker colleagues who have mentioned these concerns to me when I ask about their experiences.

Knowing that this test is so difficult and biased against me is very discouraging indeed. I think I would be a great Social Worker, I have worked with youth, troubled adults, seniors and the differently abled my whole life and I find the work very rewarding and ceaseless, that is why I want to do more and commit my life more fully to this field.

Please help eliminate this barrier from me by voting in favor of Resolution 362-A Supporting the Social Work Workforce Act.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sharon Her

I'm writing on behalf of Zafar, owner of International News and Magazines on East 86 Street. I have lived on the UES for 35+ years and Zafar has been in my neighborhood for 28 years. He is a responsible, reliable, pleasant and kind member of our community. This small business sells international newspapers, journals and magazines in several languages; one would have to travel well outside the UES to find a store like it. We should be supporting small businesses and owners like Zafar instead of crippling him with red tape that serves no purpose. The building his store is in is set to be demolished. Zafar wants to relocate in the neighborhood he has served for 28 years. He will lose his livelihood at the end of this month because the city is preventing him from moving his current licenses to a new location! Help him!! We want Zafar and his store in our neighborhood! Do something to make this City livable again. Please don't fail this man, his family and the neighborhood!

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Andrew Schuenh

Address: Associated General Counsel

I represent: NYC DWCP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Carlos Ortiz

Address: Deputy Commissioner for

I represent: External Affairs

Address: NYC DWCP

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/17/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ZAFAR AHMED

Address: [REDACTED] 86 St - N.Y., N.Y. 10028

I represent: MY SELF INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Address: [REDACTED] 86 St - N.Y., N.Y. 10028

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1290/445 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 06/17/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Cook left 111th St N.Y. 10028

Address: [Redacted] New York NY

I represent: New York Self Storage Assoc

Address: 121 State Street Albany NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1016 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/17/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Grace

Address: [Redacted] Bx NY 10454

I represent: GO50/SAVE

Address: 1652 Park Ave NY NY 10029

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1016 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6.17.25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: [Redacted]

Address: [Redacted] Brooklyn

I represent: Miss [Redacted] / Brooklyn

Address: [Redacted] Brooklyn

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1308 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MAX BOOKMAN

Address: 325 BROADWAY

I represent: POSOLSKY & BOOKMAN PC

Address: SAN

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1016 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kevin Mestrich

Address: [REDACTED] 124th Street, NY, NY

I represent: Getting Out and Staying Out

Address: [REDACTED] 124th Street, NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kevin Mestrich

Address: [REDACTED] East 124th Street

I represent: Getting Out and Staying Out (GOSA)

Address: [REDACTED] East 124th Street

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1016 Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DAVID PUCINO

Address: _____

I represent: GIFFORDS

Address: 244 Madison Ave Ste 147

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1016 Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 6/17/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ia Sofocleous

Address: [REDACTED] 79th St, 10075

I represent: students Demand Action

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms