

**Testimony of Commissioner Lorelei Salas
New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection**

**Before the Committee on
Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing**

**Hearing on
Fiscal Year 2022 Preliminary Budget**

March 16, 2021

Introduction

Good afternoon Chair Ayala and members of the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing. I am Lorelei Salas, Commissioner of the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, also known as DCWP. I am joined by Steven Ettannani, our Executive Director of External Affairs, and Nick Rozza, our Assistant Commissioner of Finance and Administration. It is my pleasure to see you all and testify once again before this committee, on behalf of the agency and its budget for Fiscal Year 2022.

Presently, DCWP licenses more than 59,000 businesses and individuals in more than 50 industries. We enforce essential consumer protection, licensing, and workplace laws that serve countless New Yorkers, and offer programming that increases access in our city to high-quality financial services for New Yorkers. I consider this work to be some of the most consequential that comes before the Council, particularly as our communities have lived this past year of uncertainty and fear, as well as insecure finances, insecure jobs and unforeseen costs.

Today, I will highlight our agency's work throughout this past year, our successes on behalf of consumers and workers, as well as our legislative efforts to make our city more equitable and livable, even as the fundamentals of our life in New York and the country were upended by the pandemic. Lastly, I will close with the challenges ahead we will seek to surmount as an agency, and as a city.

DCWP's Budget, Headcount and Work

To frame our conversation today, let me begin by stating that our preliminary budget for the upcoming fiscal year is approximately \$43.1 million. For Fiscal Year 22, our authorized headcount will stand at 408, down 25 since I testified before you last year; and our active headcount is 370. Since our budget hearing last year, we have taken in 37,000 consumer complaints, conducted more than 29,000 inspections, completed close to 12,000 financial empowerment appointments, and opened 700 new worker protection cases.

COVID-19: Revisioning Approaches and Services to New Yorkers

Following the states of emergency declared last year by the Mayor and the Governor, and guidance to shelter in place, DCWP found itself faced with an utterly new paradigm of how to

serve our various constituencies. We worked quickly, for the safety of our staff and clients, to identify the concerns and needs for our small businesses and to offer our services to consumers remotely.

One of our first steps was to work with our Administration colleagues, and then the Council, to extend the license expiration dates and renewal deadlines for more than 54,000 licensees. Now, to supplement the 59 days the agency routinely provides businesses for their renewal after their license expires, licensees will also receive an additional 45 days to renew their license after Mayoral Executive Order 107 lapses, totaling 104 days for businesses to renew their licenses. Furthermore, given that many sidewalk café licensees were unable to offer dining on premises, DCWP and the Council similarly collaborated to waive consent fees for these restaurants' use of the public sidewalk, saving these businesses more than \$12 million this past program year.

Throughout the pandemic, we have disseminated this information to businesses across 98,000 inquiries we received online or over the phone. DCWP also developed resources in up to 14 languages to help employers in our city safely reopen, which, throughout the state of emergency, we distributed at more than 510 outreach events with more than 33,000 attendees, including 33 Business Education Days, three times the number required by local law. In conjunction with our Visiting Inspector Program, our staff has personally visited more than 3,500 individual businesses for one-on-one, in-person educational outreach. Additionally, since our licensing center in Manhattan and the city's Small Business Support Center in Jamaica reopened in August, we have served nearly 5,500 customers, while abiding by statewide health and safety guidance.

Along these lines, the onset of the pandemic has required us to be nimble and rethink how we provide New Yorkers services, such as financial counseling and coaching and free tax preparation, to name a few. These services traditionally focused on reducing debt, building credit, or developing savings, but in the past year have evolved to help New Yorkers obtain Economic Impact Payments, determine eligibility for benefits and emergency resources, and seek relief from student loan debt payments.

The transition to remote services has required an ongoing education for both our contracted providers and clients in utilizing digital connections and spaces to communicate with one another. The obvious difficulties that exist are principally those of access, especially as many public spaces that we would have previously leveraged, such as our public libraries, have had to close for health and safety concerns. However, to date, we have been able to serve more than 5,000 Financial Empowerment Center clients, and we have seen a 13% rise in our "show rate" with clients. In our popular free tax preparation program, NYC Free Tax Prep, we continue to offer online services, although last year's in-person services were by necessity limited by the governor's order to shelter in place at the beginning of March. That said, for the 2021 tax season, we will have 9 out of our 15 contracted providers offering in-person and drop-off service at 40 locations across the City.

Protecting New Yorkers from Scams and Unfair Work Practices

At our last budget hearing, I described to the committee the extraordinary steps we took to declare face masks as a good in short supply during a state of emergency. This, we now know, was just the beginning of endemic price gouging we saw throughout the city, of goods that our consumers use to prevent, limit the spread of, and treat COVID-19. To date, we have received more than 12,500 complaints from New Yorkers regarding price gouging since the start of the emergency.

Just some examples of what we have seen include face masks sold for \$50 a packet, or even small individual bottles of hand sanitizer sold for \$35 each. I, myself, recounted last year that I personally witnessed a business selling a box of face masks for \$200. Imagine for yourselves, a senior in the Bronx spending a huge portion of her benefits just to try to keep her hands clean. An immigrant worker in Brooklyn spending what is left of their paycheck to protect themselves from this deadly disease.

In our analysis of the complaints we received, the data demonstrates that price gouging occurs in our neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19, which are also home to black and brown communities¹. Based on what our communities have shared, we can tell you that price gouging affects the people who have the least available to lose right now. It brings unpredictable costs to our low-income earners, to our seniors, and to our immigrants in a time when our economic system is fragile. We continue to take in complaints and inspect businesses for compliance, on this issue and others, and to do our job on behalf of New Yorkers.

Of great pride within the agency is that, throughout this pandemic, the protections we enforce on behalf of workers have never wavered nor lapsed, especially in the troubling early months of the pandemic when all the city and its workers felt was insecurity. However, we were of firm belief that this was not the time, nor should it ever be, when we should place the burdens of public health and fiscal crises upon those who are most in need. When workers are sick, it is vital that they can stay home without fear of missing a paycheck and to protect themselves, their coworkers, their customers and their employers. A worker needs to know that when they show up ready to work, they will not unexpectedly have their schedule changed, depriving them of much needed pay. And, workers, such as our freelancers, need to feel assured that if they do the job, they get paid for the job.

Since March, we have received calls from more than 11,500 workers, highlighting how much our city sees DCWP as its resource for information and protection. And, in the past year, amid reduced employment and intense financial insecurity we have secured \$1.25 million in restitution for 1,300 workers who had their rights violated. This is our mission on behalf of New Yorkers, to ensure that these protections that the Administration and the Council have established over the past 7 years have a meaningful impact in our city.

To put this into context, late last year our former chair, Councilmember Cohen, and Local 338 of RWDSU contacted the agency regarding 19 workers at a local grocery store who had been illegally fired by their new employer. Nineteen essential workers who worked the entire pandemic to help feed their community. We worked this case and we were able to get those workers their jobs back and to get them \$90,000 in restitution for their back wages.

¹ <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dca/downloads/pdf/partners/PriceGougingAnalysis.pdf>

Legislative Successes and Ongoing Priorities

More importantly, our partnership with the Council extends beyond referrals for enforcement of consumer and workers' rights, but also to the legislation that forms the steel trusses of those rights. Local Law 97 of 2020 is one such piece of legislation whereby the City updated its Paid Safe and Sick Leave law to match state standards, and ensured that all paid care workers – those workers in our homes that care for our elderly, our children, or help maintain our households in other ways – have the same rights to leave accrual and leave use as any other private sector worker in the city. As a former paid care worker, myself, I thank you all for recognizing this vital work.

Last August, the Council and the Administration also successfully enacted Local Law 80, which officially changed the name of our agency to the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, and enshrined key protections, such as the rights of our consumers and workers to equitable relief and restitution across all our laws.

Simultaneously, we worked with the state legislature and ultimately the governor's office to enact a law empowering the agency to docket in civil court judgments that award New Yorkers restitution or equitable relief. This long-standing priority helps the agency level the playing field for honest businesses and affected consumers. It strengthens our ability to secure for New Yorkers monetary and other relief that they were awarded against businesses that violated the City's Consumer Protection Law, municipal workplace laws and licensing laws.

Next on our legislative agenda, as many of you know, remains Introduction 1622, our priority to modernize the Consumer Protection Law (CPL) for the 21st Century. And here, I would like to thank Councilmember Chin, and Chair Ayala, and other members of the Committee for your ongoing support of this legislation. Introduction 1622 guarantees consumers commonsense protections for their transactions that occur on the internet or that are completed in languages other than English. It also, importantly, adjusts for inflation the civil penalties for violating the CPL.

Our agency's foundational law has been a centerpiece of our city's obligation to protect our constituents from harm and deception since 1969, in particular our city's seniors, immigrants, black and brown communities, and others. Today's penalties under the CPL are already among the lowest consumer protection penalties in the country, reflecting an economy in 1969 when our consumers' minimum wage was \$1.30 an hour. And, we all agree that when it comes to protecting vulnerable New Yorkers, up to date penalties make sense, such as the penalties in Council's recent legislation to protect our small businesses from unreasonable delivery app fees, to require businesses to disclose their collection of biometric data, or to require hotels to report their service disruptions. It cannot be allowed that those minority of businesses and corporations who seek to derive profit off of deceiving New Yorkers for their fragile incomes should be allowed to operate with impunity in our city.

We as a city need to strengthen, now more than ever, the fundamental law that protects everyday New Yorkers who are suffering during these crises of financial instability and unforeseen costs.

We look forward to Council taking up 1622 as a standalone bill or including its key provisions in the small business relief package.

New Areas of Work

This past year has also brought new responsibilities and protections for us to uphold on behalf of New Yorkers. Just Cause rights for our city's 70,000 fast food workers, legislation championed by Councilmember Lander, represent the next forward step in our fight for an equitable and livable city for our residents. As we mentioned at our legislative hearing, to enforce worker protections, especially these in a whole new field of work, requires additional personnel to perform outreach, implementation, intake, investigations, and litigation. And this law requires not only administrative enforcement by DCWP but also the creation of an entirely new arbitration program for resolving wrongful discharge disputes. Setting up and staffing these operations are necessary to ensure that businesses understand how to comply with the law and that we have the ability to protect workers who are illegally dismissed.

Another new area of work is the Office of Street Vendor Enforcement, which Council's legislation requires to be operational by September 1st of this year. We anticipate being officially designated with the legal authority of this office shortly and are preparing ourselves and our resource needs for the task at hand. In order to enforce street vending for more than 2,000 general vendor licensees and 5,000 food vendor permittees, as well as at least another 13,000 unlicensed vendors, we believe a fully staffed office will require new resources over the next four fiscal years². What we know from our small businesses, both street vendors and brick and mortar establishments, is that they want responsible and fair enforcement, not the same unaccountability and disparate heavy-handedness of the past. We have begun working with OMB to ensure these resources are included as part of the upcoming Fiscal Year 22 Executive Budget, in order for the Office of Street Vendor Enforcement to have the capacity in place to do this work the right way, with standards of success that New Yorkers expect, and that this agency has brought to its other facets of work.

Conclusion

So much has changed in the past year since many of us sat together at City Hall, unknowing of the altered course our lives and our city would take. However, we as New Yorkers have never been ones to give in or give up. And, I am truly proud to say that this agency is but a microcosm of that spirit. And, moreover, one that is dedicated to creating real change, to creating real protections, and to creating real equity for New Yorkers. It is my honor to partner with this Council and this Administration in protecting New Yorkers today and for the future to come. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to your questions.

EXHIBIT 1: Office of Labor Policy and Standards (OLPS) Headcount and Worker Protection Laws

² https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/file/WIEGO_FactSheet_NYC_SVP_web.pdf

Headcount	Worker Protection Laws Enforced by OLPS
Total Staff: 25 11 Investigators 7 Attorneys 3 Researchers 3 Intake, Operations, and Navigation 1 Outreach and Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYC's Paid Safe and Sick Leave Law (Earned Safe and Sick Time Act) NYC's Fair Workweek Law NYC's Freelance Isn't Free Law NYC's Commuter Benefits Law Grocery Worker Retention Act Living Wage Law NYC's Temporary Schedule Change Law Displaced Building Service Workers Protection Act Car Wash Accountability Law City Laundry Equity and Accountability Law <u>PENDING: Just Cause</u>

EXHIBIT 2: Enforcement Division and Their Respective Charges Citywide

Tobacco Enforcement 7 inspectors 2 supervisors <i>Funded by New York State Department of Health</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspection of Tobacco Retail Dealers and Electronic Cigarette Dealers Compliance Inspection on Underage Youth Sales
Petroleum Enforcement 6 inspectors 1 supervisor <i>Partially funded by New York State Agriculture and Markets (NYS A&M)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspection of Fuel Truck Meters and Gasoline Stations (annually as mandated by state law) Inspection of Fuel Truck Meters on Fuel Trucks Delivering Fuel to City Agencies (biannually) Petroleum Product Sampling (funded by NYS A&M) Onsite Weights and Measures Testing for Businesses
Special Enforcement 3 inspectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance Inspections for Sightseeing Bus and Horse-Drawn Cab (mandated 3 times per year and subject of a previous audit) Qualifying Inspections for Pedicab (annually), Tow Truck Vehicle (every other year), Sidewalk Café (mandated), and Stoop Line Stand Business Education for New Licensees Tow Truck Location Qualifying Inspection (mandated for license applicants or new DARP and ROTOW participants)
General Vending 4 inspectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Vending Enforcement/Education <u>PENDING: Office of Street Vendor Enforcement</u>
Borough Enforcement 18 Inspectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed Business* Inspections (mandated at least once every two years) Scale Inspections (annually, mandated, and subject of previous audit) Non-license Categories** Compliance Inspections on Agriculture and Markets Law, Truth in Pricing Law, Consumer Protection Law, and Industry-specific Laws and Regulations Complaint-based Inspections on Certain Business Activities***

*Licensed Business Categories include:

Amusement Arcade | Amusement Device (Permanent) | Amusement Device (Portable) | Amusement Device (Temporary) | Auction House | Auctioneer | Bingo Game Operator | Booting Company | Car Wash | Commercial Lessor (Bingo/Games Of Chance) | Dealer In Products For The Disabled | Electronic & Home Appliance Service Dealer | Electronics Store | Employment Agency | Games of Chance | Gaming Café | Garage | Garage & Parking Lot | Home Improvement Contractor | Horse Drawn Cab Driver | Horse

Drawn Cab Owner | Laundries | Locksmith | Locksmith Apprentice | Newsstand | Parking Lot | Pawnbroker | Pedicab Business | Pedicab Driver | Scrap Metal Processor | Secondhand Dealer-General | Secondhand Dealer-Auto | Sidewalk Cafe | Sightseeing Bus | Sightseeing Guide | Special Sale | Stoop Line Stand | Storage Warehouse | Temporary Street Fair Vendor Permit | Ticket Seller Individual | Ticket Seller Business | Tow Truck Company



CARROLL GARDENS ASSOCIATION, Inc.

March 15, 2021

Dear New York City Council Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing,

I am writing on behalf of the Carroll Gardens Association and our over 1,000 domestic worker members across New York City who have benefited from the Office of Labor and Policy Standards' (OLPS) resources, advocacy, and commitment, to raising standards in the domestic work industry.

The domestic worker industry, made up of over 200,000 nannies, house cleaners, and caregivers, employed in private households – together comprise the paid care workforce, the work that makes all other work possible. Consisting primarily of women of color and immigrants, the paid care workforce has faced harsh working conditions, caused by structural inequities rooted in historical exclusions from many federal and state labor protections that persist today. The challenges faced by domestic workers include exclusion from the right to organize, general lack of respect for and devaluation of women's work, an immigration regime that has kept much of the domestic workforce in the shadows for fear of deportation, and the challenge of enforcing labor laws in private households. A vast majority of our members have experienced wage theft, not getting paid sick time, paid time off, along with issues of discrimination and sexual harassment. COVID-19 has both revealed these long-standing dynamics of the domestic work industry while deepening the precarity of workers to access basic needs. Because most workers don't have a contract, they were immediately fired or put on indefinite leave without pay, reducing their income to practically nothing (a majority of members we surveyed had less than \$1000 in savings and are often supporting a family on their own), or forced to continue working while risking their health. Furthermore, many workers not able to access unemployment insurance and were excluded from government stimulus.

OLPS has been a vital resource for domestic workers, offering a hotline where workers can get individualised guidance on labor law, facilitating convenings with employers and worker centers to increase awareness of new legislation, and providing critical enforcement resources so workers get paid sick time and overtime. And yet, their work is not nearly enough to meet the need we see every day from our members. I am requesting that the Committee increase funding to OLPS so they are able to hire more staff to increase enforcement and ensure that domestic workers do not continue to fall through the cracks of our City's commitment to worker rights.

I would be happy to provide further information or testimony in support of increased funding for OLPS.

Sincerely,

Ben Fuller-Googins

Program and Planning Director

Carroll Gardens Association

A Not for Profit Organization

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Good afternoon, my name is Mohamed Attia, I am the Director of the Street Vendor Project. The Street Vendor Project (SVP) is a membership-based organization working to improve the working conditions of the approximately 20,000 people who sell food and merchandise on the streets of New York City.

SVP, founded in 2001, strives to improve and expand vending as a viable, lawful employment option for immigrants, military veterans, and other entrepreneurs.

As the only organization that focuses on street vendors in New York City, through direct legal representation, small business development and training, organizing support, leadership development, and strategic legislative advocacy.

We have connected nearly 3,000 street vendors to resources and information about housing, food access, and loan and grant opportunities in the past year alone.

The Street Vendor Project (SVP) requests support from New York City Council to further develop and expand the essential multilingual services we offer to street vendors, an estimated population of 20,000.

These vendors are our City's smallest business owners who provide fresh, affordable food and merchandise to New Yorkers.

Vendors have special needs related to the mobility of their businesses. Additionally, it can be difficult to establish relationships within the vendor community due to language, residency status, and other barriers.

In January 2021, New York City Council passed landmark legislation, Introduction 1116-B, reforming the entire street vending system.

The news of the bill has excited street vendors across the city who are eager to apply for a supervisory license and become part of the formalized economy.

SVP staff members are fielding hundreds of calls per week to advise vendors.

As the only organization that focuses on street vendors in New York City, our services were already in high demand throughout the COVID-19 crisis, as we connected nearly 2,000 street vendors to resources and information about housing, food access, and loan and grant opportunities.

Vendors across the five boroughs reach out to SVP because of our long history working within the community. Since the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated New York City, street vendors, many of whom are undocumented immigrants, have seen up to a 90% loss of income in their daily lives.

This high volume of intakes has presented an unsustainable demand on a small staff body and the organization, hence our urgent request of support to increase our ability to respond. With the increased need to inform vendors of the updated rules and regulations, as well as to respond to urgent COVID-19 related needs, SVP requests support to expand capacity for our culturally and linguistically specific outreach services across the five boroughs. SVP proposes to hire Outreach & Education Specialists who will conduct outreach to vendors across the five boroughs in a variety of engagement methods, with each of these positions focused in one of the five most common languages spoken by vendors: Arabic, Bengali, Mandarin, Spanish, and Wolof. Additionally, the Education and Outreach Specialists will work with SVP's Graphic Designer to create linguistically specific materials, as well as materials for the illiterate population. To monitor and evaluate progress, the

Education and Outreach Specialists will document and track their education and outreach efforts by collecting vendors' demographic information, initial knowledge (or lack thereof) of the bill, and resources needed.

Mohamed Attia
Director
Street Vendor Project
Urban Justice Center



TESTIMONY OF MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK

New York City Council Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing

DCWP and OLPS Budget Hearing

March 16, 2021

Make the Road New York (MRNY) is pleased to submit this testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Consumer and Business Licensing in support of increased funding to the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP) to ensure the agency has sufficient resources to effectively enforce New York City's critical worker protections in these difficult times.

MRNY is a non-profit community-based membership organization with over 24,000 low-income members dedicated to building the power of immigrant and working-class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services, including legal services for workplace justice, immigration, and housing issues. MRNY's five community centers, including centers in the New York City neighborhoods of Jackson Heights, Bushwick, and Port Richmond, provide a broad array of support to thousands of New Yorkers every year. Our workplace justice legal team represents hundreds of workers each year in cases to enforce their workplace rights and provides community rights education that reaches thousands more.

MRNY thanks the City Council, and the Committees on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing and Labor for continuing to strengthen workers' rights in New York City. Our City continues to be recognized as a model throughout the country for our progressive worker and consumer protections and forward-thinking outreach, education, and enforcement practices. DCWP and its Office of Labor and Policy and Standards (OLPS), in particular, have performed critical work in ensuring New Yorkers' rights under a growing number of innovative municipal labor standards laws, and their mission has perhaps never been as necessary as right now. MRNY's members have benefitted tremendously from DCWP's work over the past several years.

DCWP is an even more critical and necessary resource now for MRNY and for the largely working class immigrant communities in which we work that have been hit disproportionately hard by the pandemic. Over the course of this past year, working New Yorkers' lives have been deeply affected by this once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic. Through these unprecedented and deeply challenging times, many MRNY clients have faced retaliation and loss of pay for exercising their right to sick leave. Even more disturbingly, many also reported being pressured into working despite being unwell. DCWP's work to enforce the Paid Sick and Safe Leave law and increase awareness of these protections amongst workers and employers throughout the City has afforded many New Yorkers an opportunity to assert their rights and, in so doing, protect themselves, their families, and their colleagues during this public health crisis. And for our clients who faced retaliation, or threats of retaliation, and were denied these rights, DCWP's work has enabled many to receive much-needed financial compensation for these rights violations and lost income.

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While the need for DCWP's enforcement continues to increase as more people come forward to report PSSSL and other violations, the agency is not staffed adequately to handle the increased flow of complaints, let alone gear up to implement new laws, including the Fast Food Just Cause bill. DCWP performs excellent work investigating reports of PSSSL violations. However, MRNY clients have experienced lengthier response and investigation times due to decreased staffing at DCWP and increased demand from workers. Additionally, it appears that, due to limited capacity, OLPS is less frequently able to conduct systemic enforcement efforts through company-wide investigations into employers' compliance with PSSSL; rather, it generally must limit the scope of its investigations to the claim(s) of the complainant(s). Inadequate staffing and the resulting shifts in the City's enforcement of the PSSSL law and other worker protection laws may, unfortunately, lessen the pressure on employers to comply with their legal obligations, contribute to employers' sense of impunity, and undermine compliance.

Moreover, low-wage workers in New York City have suffered the brunt of the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, and delays in adjudication of their claims translate to real economic hardship for our city's most vulnerable workers at the time when they are least able to weather any disruption to their employment or income. Workers who lose income may turn to other city services for relief. Therefore, we desperately need a significant increase of funding to OLPS and DCWP so as to support their critical work.

OLPS is also home to the City's Paid Care Division, which provides resources for New York City's nannies, cleaners, and caregivers and advocates to raise standards in the paid care industry. Consisting primarily of women of color and immigrants, the paid care workforce has faced harsh working conditions, caused by structural inequities rooted in historical exclusions from many federal and state labor protections that persist to this day. The challenges faced by domestic workers include exclusion from the right to organize, general lack of respect for and devaluation of women's work, an immigration regime that has kept much of the domestic workforce in the shadows for fear of deportation, and the challenge of enforcing labor laws in private households. Countless domestic workers in New York City have experienced wage theft, denial of paid sick time, and issues of discrimination and sexual harassment. The Paid Care Division's resources, advocacy, and continued support of the Paid Care Industry Working Group have served as lifelines for thousands of domestic workers, especially in the past year, when so many have been vulnerable to significant safety concerns and disruption in their employment.

To give just one example of what our clients experience: At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic's first wave in New York City last spring, a housekeeper who had worked for her employer for over three years fell sick. Like thousands of immigrant workers in the City, she began to experience the tell-tale signs of COVID-19, and called her employer to notify her that she would need to isolate for at least two weeks. Despite being covered by the City's PSSSL, her employer refused to pay her any of the sick leave she was entitled to by law, and the worker faced retaliation as her employer withheld some outstanding wages. With the help of the Paid Care Division, her case was referred to Make the Road for legal assistance, and she was able to file a claim against her former employer and recover both the sick leave and some civil penalties. Not only did this settlement provide some urgently needed financial relief, but our client shared that she felt empowered by the experience of holding her former employer accountable in this way.

MRNY strongly supports the City's continued steps to raise worker standards with the passage of the Fast Food Just Cause and Street Vendor laws, but we are deeply concerned that a failure to increase DCWP's funding in relation to its new mandates will compromise its ability to ensure these laws have their intended benefits for working-class New Yorkers. Both laws have enormous potential for our

members. Our clients who work in the fast food industry will benefit enormously from increased protection from arbitrary and unjust termination and meaningful remedies for violations. And our members who make their livelihood selling food and goods on NYC streets will benefit from a fairer enforcement scheme, an increase in the number of permits, and increased city supports. But both laws will require DCWP to direct a significant amount of staff and other resources towards outreach, education, implementation, and enforcement at a time when the agency is already stretched too thin. We know from our experience with the PSSSL just how critical an infusion of resources was to informing New Yorkers of their new rights and establishing the necessary infrastructure to carry out the law. It is unrealistic to imagine that DCWP will be able to fulfill its responsibilities under these laws and effectively enforce existing labor standards without a significant increase in funding.

In light of the urgent needs we have described above, we respectfully request that the New York City Council stabilize the funding and commit to significantly increasing DCWP's budget in keeping with the increases in demand and protections the agency enforces. We thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony and look forward to working with the City Council to protect the most vulnerable workers' rights during the pandemic and beyond, including re-envisioning a holistic model of employment-related civil legal services for workers from NYC's low-income and immigrant communities.

Thank you for your attention.

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