

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

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March 14, 2022

Start: 2:37 p.m.

Recess: 4:43 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 4)

B E F O R E: Julie Menin,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
Tiffany Cabán
Shekar Krishnan
Darlene Mealy
Sandra Ung
Marjorie Velázquez

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Urgen Sherpa
Chhaya CDC and USBNYC

Angelica Novoa
Director of Training and Education at New
Immigrant Community Empowerment Alliance

Michaela Skoknic
Speaking on behalf of the Southwest Brooklyn
Industrial Development Corporation

Alex Grzebyk
Staff Attorney at Brooklyn Legal Services
Corporation A

Jingying Zhai
Staff Attorney at Brooklyn Legal Service
Corporation A

Marie Rene Cita
Staff Attorney at Brooklyn Legal Services
Corporation A

Melat Seyoum
Worker Co-op Policy Advocate for the New York
City Network of Worker Cooperatives, NYCNWC

Julian McKinley
Senior Director of Communication at the Democracy
at Work Institute, DAWI

Shelley Miller
Senior Outreach Manager for the ICA Group

Matthew Shapiro
Legal Director of the Street Vendor Project at
the Urban Justice Center

Arlette Cepeda on behalf of Yesenia Mata, Deputy
Director of La Colmena

Valerie White
Executive Director of LISC New York City

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Julia Currie

Staff Attorney with the Volunteers of Legal
Service, VOLS, Microenterprise Project

Scott Bamberger

Staff Attorney at Brooklyn Legal Services
Corporation A

Ruth Lopez Martinez

Worker/Owner of the Cooperative Pa'lante Green
Clean

Maria Valdez

Workers Justice Project

Justin Scoggins

Small Business Owner recommended to CLA

Camryn Jung

Staff Attorney at Brooklyn Legal Services
Corporation A

Thidar Kyaw

Business Owner of Little Myanmar in Manhattan

Andy Bowen

Principal of Bowen Public Affairs Consulting

Kate Krug

Executive Vice President of Nontraditional
Employment for Women, NEW

Ryan Cagle

Business Outreach Center Network known as BOC
Network

Rebekah Livingston

owner of Rebekah Rich Brow & Beauty, located in
Midtown, Manhattan

Marsha Sue Trattner

Small Business owner in Red Hook Brooklyn called
She-Weld

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Nancie Katz

Director of Seeds in the Middle

Chibueze Amakwe

Business owner of Sons of Daniel testifying also
on behalf of Lara Vessal (SP?)

Bill Angelo testifying on behalf of Billy De La
Rosa
Staff Attorney at Brooklyn Legal Services
Corporation

Mirjeley Cid

Business owner of MJ Design and Imprints, located
in the Bronx testifying on behalf of Aashna Singh

Catherine Murcek

Worker/owner at Samamkaya Yoga Back Care &
Scoliosis Collective

Trina Dunston

Mother in Brownsville who worked with Nancie Katz

Aashna Singh

Program Coordinator here at Brooklyn A

SERGEANT BIONDO: Recording to the PC underway.

SERGEANT PEREZ: Recording to the Cloud is running.

SERGEANT BIONDO: Thank you. Good afternoon and welcome to today's Remote New York City Council Hearing for the Preliminary Budget 2023 for the Committee on Small Business.

At this time, would all panelists please turn on their video for verification purposes and to minimize any disruptions while speaking, please place all electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode. If you would like to submit testimony, please send via email to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that is testimony@council.nyc.gov. You have 72-hours to submit testimony.

Thank you for your cooperation. Chair Menin, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Wonderful, thank you so much. [GAVEL]. Good morning everyone and welcome to today's remote budget hearing. My name is Julie Menin and I am the Chair of the Council's Committee on Small Business.

Today, we'll be hearing from the Department of Small Business Services on their Fiscal 2023

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2 Preliminary Budget. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a
3 devastating impact on New York City's small
4 businesses. With thousands of small businesses all
5 across the city shutting down and many small
6 businesses have experienced a sharp decline in
7 revenue. Most have exhausted available government
8 assistance and many continue to struggle to keep
9 their doors open.

10 I strongly believe that small businesses are the
11 backbone of the economy and what makes New York
12 City's neighborhoods unique and vibrant. They need
13 the city's continued support and assistance to get
14 back on their feet. As such, I want to hear from the
15 agency how this preliminary budget is responding to
16 the needs of our small business community and how
17 resources will be utilized for recovery from the
18 COVID-19 pandemic.

19 The Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget for SBS totals
20 \$178.6 million with \$28.3 million or 15.8 percent to
21 be exact proposed for personal services otherwise
22 known as PS to support 294 full-time employees. Of
23 the total budget at the agency, \$108.9 million or
24 60.9 percent supports the department and the
25 remaining \$69.6 million is passed through funding for

the Economic Development Incorporation and NYC and Co.

The Departments Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget is decreasing by \$219.1 million. I'm going to repeat that. \$219.1 million across all program areas when compared to the Fiscal 2022 Adopted Budget. This overall decrease is driven by a range of factors, including the absence of one time City Council discretionary funding and efficiency savings.

The most significant decrease is due to the elimination of the American Rescue Plan Act, federal funding of \$103.7 for the small business grant program that the agency had executed for the COVID-19 assistance for small businesses.

The Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Plan also does not include the 30 million American Rescue Plan Act, federal funding for the small business loan fund program. Federal funds comprise 29 percent of SBS's Fiscal 2023 budget. In contrast, the Fiscal 2022 Adopted Budget was largely funded by federal funds at 64.6 percent. The Administration was aware that the additional federal funding was a one-shot funding for pandemic relief.

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2 So my main question in this hearing quite
3 honestly is why did the agency not set aside more city
4 funding for small businesses in the Fiscal 2023
5 Preliminary Plan to make up for the reduction in
6 federal funding. As far as SBS's Preliminary Budget,
7 I want to know what the agency's long-term plan is
8 for helping small business recover from the economic
9 devastation caused by the pandemic.

10 At a time when small businesses need crucial help
11 in recovering, I'm disappointed to see the agency
12 apply the Program to Eliminate Gap otherwise of
13 course known as a PEG, which reduces funding for the
14 agency programs such as construction safety, CUNY's
15 two time tech and many other important programs.
16 Will the PEG's lead to reduction in services and
17 deliver those by the agency?

18 There was a decrease of 29 positions for SBS in
19 the Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget, when compared to
20 the Fiscal 2022 Adopted Budget. The majority of
21 positions that were eliminated when they became
22 vacant. Does the agency believe the right step is to
23 eliminate the vacancies?

24 Small businesses in the city are in dire need of
25 assistance and a reduction in headcount could impact

1
2 the range and size of assistance provided. It's the
3 Council's responsibility of course to ensure that the
4 city's budget is fair, that it's transparent. That
5 it's accountable to all New Yorkers. This includes
6 equity in funding and assistance.

7 As they recently wrote in an op ed in the Daily
8 News, the agency should ensure that all existing
9 business improvement districts or BIDs receive
10 comparable city support. Parity and equity and city
11 support will ensure that all commercial corridors are
12 clean, safe and vibrant and that businesses in all
13 neighborhoods are thriving.

14 I'm very appreciative of the Mayor for including
15 my idea in calling for increased funding for smaller
16 bids in the outer boroughs in particular and the
17 unveiling of the blueprint for New York City's
18 economic recovery.

19 As the Chair of the Committee of Small Business,
20 I will continue to push for accountability and
21 accuracy and ensure that the budget reflects the
22 needs and interests of the city. This hearing is a
23 vital part of the process and I expect that SBS will
24 be responsive to the questions and concerns of the
25 Council Members here today.

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2 I look forward to an active engagement with the
3 administration over the next few months to ensure
4 that the Fiscal 2023 Adopted Budget meets the goals
5 that the Council has set out. I first of all want to
6 thank Commissioner Kim for testifying today. I also
7 want to thank SBS's staff who have been consistently
8 responsive to our requests. We would not be able to
9 analyze the city's budget at such a detailed level
10 without their cooperation, so thank you to them. And
11 I want to thank both my staff and the staff at the
12 Council for their incredible work both in the finance
13 and legislative divisions and for all their help in
14 preparing for this hearing today.

15 I also want to acknowledge my colleagues who are
16 on. I know we are joined by Council Members Ung,
17 Council Member Velázquez, Council Member Cabán,
18 Council Member Mealy and I know we'll be joined by
19 additional colleagues and I'll announce them as they
20 join.

21 I'm now going to turn it over to the Counsel for
22 some procedural items to go over. Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. My name is
24 Stephanie Jones and I am Counsel to the Committee on
25 Small Business. Before we begin, I want to remind

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2 everyone that you will be on mute until you are
3 recognized to speak, at which time you will be
4 unmuted by the host.

5 If you mute yourself after you have been unmuted,
6 you will need to be unmuted again by the host.

7 Please be aware that there could be a delay in muting
8 and unmuting, so please be patient. During the
9 hearing, if Council Members would like to ask
10 questions, please use the Zoom raise hand function
11 and you will be called on to speak. We will be
12 limiting Council Member questions to five minutes
13 including responses.

14 I will now administer the affirmation to the
15 Administration witnesses, including those available
16 for Q&A.

17 Do you affirm that your testimony will be
18 truthful to the best of your knowledge information
19 and belief? Commissioner Kim?

20 KEVIN KIM: I do.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Commissioner.
22 First Deputy Commissioner Mallon?

23 JACKIE MALLON: I do.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Deputy
25 Commissioner for Business Services Kitty Chan?

KITTY CHAN: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Commissioner for
Neighborhood Development Blaise Backer?

BLAISE BACKER: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Deputy
Commissioner for Economic and Financial Opportunity
Dynishal Gross?

DYNISHAL GROSS: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Deputy
Commissioner for Workforce Development Lucinda
Glover? Okay, I'll circle back to you Commissioner.
Deputy Commissioner for Legal and Regulatory Affairs
Andrew Schwartz?

ANDREW SCHWARTZ: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, Deputy Commissioner
Glover, do you have audio?

LUCINDA GLOVER: Can you hear me?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

LUCINDA GLOVER: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, great. Thank you so
much. Commissioner Kim, you may begin when you are
ready.

KEVIN KIM: Thank you. Good afternoon Chair
Menin and members of the Committee on Small Business.

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2 My name is Kevin D. Kim and I am the Commissioner of
3 the New York City Department of Small Business
4 Services or SBS. I am joined by SBS First Deputy
5 Commissioner Jackie Mallon and members of my senior
6 leadership team. I am pleased to testify today on
7 SBS's Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget.

8 At SBS, through the work of our four divisions,
9 we aim to unlock economic potential and create
10 economic security for all New Yorkers by connecting
11 them to good jobs, creating stronger businesses, and
12 building vibrant neighborhoods across the five
13 boroughs. Our Division of Economic and Financial
14 Opportunity is focused on helping the city's MWBEs
15 connect to more government contracting opportunities.

16 Our Division of Business Services helps
17 businesses of every size and sector start, operate,
18 and grow in New York City. Our Neighborhood
19 Development Division equips community-based partners,
20 including Business Improvement Districts or BIDs,
21 with the resources needed to help our commercial
22 corridors thrive. And, last but not least, our
23 Workforce Development Division works to increase
24 access to quality trainings and jobs for all New
25 Yorkers.

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2 SBS's Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary budget is
3 \$178.5 million with a headcount of 294 employees.
4 Our budget includes \$85.9 million in pass-through
5 funding to other city entities, including the New
6 York City Economic Development Corporation or EDC,
7 NYC & Company and Governors Island. We serve as a
8 conduit for funding to these other city entities, and
9 thus, do not spend or manage any of these funds. The
10 remaining \$92.6 million, or 51.9 percent of the
11 Fiscal Year 2023 Preliminary Budget, is allocated for
12 SBS' own programs and services. But before we talk
13 about Fiscal Year 2023 and the future, I would like
14 to ask you to take a moment to recall the onset of
15 the pandemic when so much was unknown.

16 Estimates of the potential impact to businesses
17 and workers varied widely, ranging from incidental to
18 catastrophic and changing daily. Under these
19 unprecedented circumstances, SBS staff worked
20 tirelessly to rapidly deploy resources to all those
21 who relied on us, small businesses, jobseekers,
22 community partners and anyone who called our newly-
23 created hotline.

24 Among the things the team at SBS accomplished are
25 having: Delivered approximately 10,000 grants of

\$10,000 each to small businesses via the Small Business Resilience Grant program. Expanded the Commercial Lease Assistance program, which served close to 300 businesses in the first half of Fiscal Year 2022. Developed and launched new training programs like Future Code, a web development program designed to address the unique challenges of under-represented tech pros, including Black and Latinx New Yorkers. Partnered with over 1,600 employers to connect more than 33,000 New Yorkers to new jobs. Significantly upgraded the MWBE online directory, so that customers could more easily connect to our MWBE businesses. Delivered nearly 4,000 instances of technical assistance to MWBE businesses seeking government contracting opportunities. Provided more than \$5.8 million in grants to 75 CBDs working in LMI communities via programs like Avenue NYC and Open Streets Grants. And worked with the 76 BIDs to address quality of life challenges and helped them to invest \$167 million in supplemental services to serve more than 93,000 businesses.

I am personally in awe of the high level of service the staff at SBS provided during the pandemic. It is truly an honor to call them my

colleagues today. Looking forward SBS's work in Fiscal Year 2023 will be shaped by our commitment to equity and greater opportunity for all. We will focus on the people who need our help the most and who have received the least. We will promote equity and economic opportunity at every turn. We will work in close partnership with private industry, philanthropy, labor, community-based organizations, elected officials, and other city agencies to achieve our goals.

Last week, Mayor Adams announced several of our top priorities for Fiscal Year 2023 in his Economic Blueprint. For example, we will: Expand our concierge service that provides businesses a sole point of contact to help navigate city requirements, regulations, and site visits. Co-Lead the implementation of the Executive Order number two, also known as "Small Business Forward," in partnership with Deputy Mayor Maria Torres Springer and the city's Chief Efficiency Officer, Melanie La Rocca.

Together we will reform existing business regulations to ensure businesses face fewer fines and penalties. We will partner with Chief Technology

Officer Matt Fraser to improve the NYC Business Portal, allowing every business in New York City to execute and track interactions with the city in real-time. We will suspend NYC fees on liquor licenses for two years and streamline the liquor license application process locally. Expand access to business education and resources in languages other than English and work closely with community groups that support immigrant entrepreneurs to align our services with community needs. Launch the Small Business Opportunity Loan Fund to meet the financing needs of local businesses and address critical gaps in access to capital, especially among LMI, immigrant and BIPOC entrepreneurs. Expand our pilot program that offers modest stipends to low-income and traditionally underserved participants in select occupational training. Partner with employers in the tech sector to meet their growing workforce needs with local, diverse talent. Upskill New Yorkers for in-demand roles in the healthcare sector, including via our Nurse Residency program and our programs that help foreign-trained nurses achieve New York State credentials. Provide long-term annual funding to the smallest BIDs under \$500,000, so that they can offer

more robust services, improve merchant outreach and better connect businesses to city services. •

And finally, bring financial empowerment mobile units to neighborhoods across the five boroughs, offering on-site assistance including free tax prep, financial counseling, and job training enrollment.

At SBS, we are committed to fulfilling Mayor Adams' clear and bold agenda to ensure the future of the city's economy is built on equity and inclusivity. We know that working closely with the City Council is critical to achieving this shared goal. Together, we can rebuild, renew, and reinvent NYC.

I look forward to our continued partnership and thank you for your time today. I welcome any questions you may have for me or my team.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Great thank you very much Commissioner and I also want to acknowledge that we've been joined by Majority Brooks-Powers and I'm going to start with some questions and then turn it over to my colleagues for questions as well.

So, I guess the first question Commissioner that I have is one that I made in the opening statement, which is obviously the Administration was aware that there was going to be a one shot federal funding, so

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2 is it – I guess why didn't the city make the decision
3 to increase additional funding to SBS, given the fact
4 that this federal funding has now dissipated and
5 obviously, this was not a surprise. We knew this was
6 going to happen. So, could you talk a little bit
7 about that?

8 KEVIN KIM: Sure, thank you Chair Menin for the
9 question. As you know during the pandemic, the
10 federal government stepped in to provide much needed
11 funding for various programs and some of that funding
12 has gone to programs that have now been completed.
13 In other cases, we know that the need is still great
14 and I think from the economic blueprint that was
15 announced just last week, we are doing everything we
16 can to address the continuing needs of the small
17 business owners.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, so how specifically
19 does the Administration plan to make up for this loss
20 of funding? How will we ensure that small businesses
21 are still being served by the city and protected?
22 Could you talk or have the members of your team talk
23 a little bit about that?

24 KEVIN KIM: I think when the Mayor came into
25 office, he had committed to rightsizing every agency

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2 and I believe that with the dedicated staff that we
3 do have at SBS, that all of the initiatives we've set
4 forth and all of the programs that we have been
5 currently running are in good positions to be run
6 effectively in Fiscal Year 2023 with the budget
7 that's set forth right now and hopefully with the
8 additional funding that may come through all of the
9 initiatives that we've been proposing.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, so I guess I just want
11 to make a comment on that. I thought the blueprint
12 was terrific. I was there at the announcement. I
13 think it's really important to have that. I'm very
14 interested in the specifics on any kind of additional
15 funding for SBS because I remain incredibly concerned
16 first of all that there's a PEG for an agency that is
17 helping our city's small businesses.

18 Secondly, that we lost this federal funding. So,
19 I can't emphasize this strongly enough. I believe
20 that this funding needs to be made up in many
21 different ways and whether it's through these
22 additional programs that the Mayor announced or
23 otherwise. You know, we really look forward to
24 hearing the details on that.

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2 KEVIN KIM: Sure, and we'd love to share all that
3 information as soon as we have the exact numbers.
4 We're working through everything, as you know, the
5 economic blueprint was just announced late last week.
6 And as soon as we have those numbers, we'll be happy
7 to share it with you but I will say that this
8 administration is laser focused on helping small
9 businesses in all the various ways they need
10 assistance. Access to capital with the announcement
11 of the Small Business Opportunity Fund. The
12 assistance of the Commercial Lease Assistance program
13 that will be continuing in Fiscal Year 2023. We also
14 have the Executive Order that's designed to help
15 small businesses to save money through reduced fines
16 and implementation of more cure periods and warnings.

17 So, I think there are various ways to help small
18 businesses that will be clearly within everything
19 that the administration has said so far and
20 everything that the administration is going to do
21 moving forward.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, and I had a question on
23 headcount. There was a decrease of 29 positions for
24 SBS that was reflected in the 2023 Prelim when
25 compared to the Fiscal 2022 Adopted Budget. The

majority of the positions as I mentioned in my opening statement are related to vacancy reductions. Has the agency determined in which program areas the vacancies will be eliminated and how is that going to impact the agencies operations in terms of helping our city's small businesses?

KEVIN KIM: So just to clarify, of the 29 vacancy reductions, 17 are personnel from the city side and then the other 12 were funded positions that have expired. And so, those were mainly for programs that have either been completed or near completion and so, with the reduction of the 17, I am personally taking a very close look at our agency structure and looking for efficiencies and redundancies as well.

But we are confident that with the dedicated staff that we have, the experience that we have, the talent that we have, that we will be able to do all the programs that we have been continuing to do and all the initiatives that we've been announcing that we will be doing going forward.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: I just want to shift gears for a minute and talk a little bit about MWBE's. How many MWBE's were certified at the end of Fiscal 2021?

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2 KEVIN KIM: So, for that, I'll turn to my First
3 Deputy Commissioner but before I do that I know that
4 currently in Fiscal Year 2022, we have 670 certified
5 MWBE's and we've also recertified approximately 750
6 MWBE's but for 2021 Fiscal Year, First Deputy
7 Commissioner Mallon, would you happen to have that
8 answer?

9 JACKIE MALLON: I think it's 10,665 but Dynishal,
10 if I am wrong? Nope, I got it right 10,665.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And what efforts does SBS
12 have to try to increase that number? How are we
13 going to get that number up? What additional efforts
14 are going to be made?

15 KEVIN KIM: This obviously is a priority for
16 administration to outreach to minority and women
17 owned businesses and we are going aggressively into
18 the communities to meet people where they are. One
19 of the things that we already launched last week was
20 the mobile units and in partnerships with DCWP, we're
21 going to where the people are and we're going to go
22 into the neighborhoods, deep into the neighborhoods,
23 to work with not just individuals and businesses, to
24 bring our service to them and one of the ways is to
25 outreach to the local businesses where the mobile

unit will be parked and getting them into our mobile units to get signed up for MWBE certification or to learn more about it.

And so, we understand that language access is a critical component of this as well and we have in the initiative – an initiative to get more language capabilities and language access out into the community to let people know about MWBE programs.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And can you talk a little bit about how the agency performed in reaching the MWBE targets that it has set and what measures is the agency taking to connect MWBE firms with emerging contracting opportunities?

KEVIN KIM: Sure, so thank you for that question. The MWBE online directory that I had mentioned in my testimony, is something that was very important to upgrade and improve the system so that New York City agencies and customers could more easily find our MWBE businesses. So, I think one of the things that we're also very much focused on is not just getting more and more MWBE certified but making sure that the MWBE's that are certified are actually getting a higher percentage of contracts. And then, related to that, we're also wanting to take that even a step

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2 further to making sure that not just the percentage
3 of awards increase but the actual dollar amounts are
4 also increased.

5 So, I think through the MWBE online directory
6 through our outreach programs, we have been on track.
7 I know for example, the city's ahead of schedule in
8 moving toward achieving the one NYC goal of \$25
9 billion in MWBE awards by mayoral and nonmayoral
10 agencies by Fiscal Year 2025.

11 So, we feel as if even during the pandemic, we've
12 continued to progress towards goals that we've set
13 further down the road.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, if you can share with
15 our committee details about that because I do remain
16 concerned that we need to do far more as a city on
17 MWBE's. I just think this is a tip of the iceberg
18 and we have a lot of work that we need to do ahead.
19 So, I'd love to drill down on specific details about
20 the numbers, the targets, all of that so we can see
21 how we can increase that.

22 I have one more question – well, I have many more
23 questions but I'm going to ask one more and then I'm
24 going to turn it over to my colleagues.

1
2 So, last question before I turn it to my
3 colleagues is on Workforce One Centers. Can you tell
4 us first of all, where are we in terms of metrics on
5 the workforce centers and if you can also tell the
6 Committee about candidate recruitment and screening
7 and deliverables?

8 KEVIN KIM: Sure, so it is true that during the
9 pandemic the one metric in the MMR that we won't be
10 able to hit is the workforce development numbers,
11 just because of the pandemic, we had an increased
12 number of people being able to access it. We did
13 pivot immediately to a virtual training and
14 accessibility program and that was quite successful
15 given the circumstances.

16 In terms of more specific numbers, I'll turn it
17 over to my First Deputy Jackie Mallon to just provide
18 a few more of the numbers now. And we can also
19 follow up with additional numbers for you.

20 JACKIE MALLON: sure, we — if you saw that the
21 MMR, you'll see that we did a little bit better in
22 the quarter of this year against last year's quarter,
23 about 5,200 or so folks into jobs. Uhm, our goal is
24 and has been to reach about 25,000 and we won't have
25 enough time to make up for what we lost during the

1
2 pandemic to meet that this year to probably come in
3 again as it did last year around \$18,000 or so. So,
4 but we are back, fully operational and people are
5 able to access us on site if they prefer that. We
6 also are continuing to offer services virtually which
7 many prefer and so, we fill like we are in good shape
8 to rebuilding it back up to that number.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you. I'm going
10 to now turn it over to Stephanie Jones, our Committee
11 Counsel to call on my colleagues to see if they have
12 any questions. Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. If any
14 Council Members have questions for the
15 Administration, please use the Zoom raise hand
16 function and you will be added to the queue. Council
17 Members, please keep your questions to five minutes,
18 which includes the time it take the Administration to
19 respond. Please wait for the Sergeant at Arms to
20 tell you when your time begins. The Sergeant will
21 let you know when your time is up.

22 Chair, I see Majority Whips, Whip Brooks-Powers
23 would like to ask a question. Please proceed.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.
25

MAJORITY WHIP BROOKS-POWERS: Hi, good afternoon.
Can you hear me? Only because I've been having
technical troubles today. Okay.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You were a little choppy but
you're good now.

MAJORITY WHIP BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.
Wonderful digital divide in Rockaway but thank you
and good afternoon everyone. Thank you Chair Menin
for facilitating today's Prelim hearing. I said I
was going to discuss how this Council and the Mayor's
Administration will continue to support our city's
small businesses and a few questions to ask the
Administration.

Uhm, I wanted to know if SBS has been conducting
outreach in certifying MWBE, so that they can be
eligible for lucrative contract and opportunities,
receive support and thrive? What funding is the
agency committing in Fiscal Year 2023 to continue
supporting MWBE's? How does the expiration of
pandemic related federal funding change SBS's
approach? And lastly, does SBS expect headcount
decreases and vacancies to impact the agencies
ability to conduct programs and maintain

relationships with the businesses across our communities?

KEVIN KIM: So, thank you Council Member. I will start in reverse with the last question. It's something akin to what Chair Menin had asked. We know that the 17 vacancies that won't be filled again will not impact us in the way that some may think because of again, some of the organizational restructuring that I'll be organizing here through efficiencies and redundancies and internal reorg. that's going to happen.

We feel that the staff here true and tested through the pandemic is more than up to the challenge of being able to deliver all of our services to the highest level that the city has come to expect from SBS, SBS-ers and we are confident that the new initiatives that are coming online to, we'll be able to deliver those as well with the staff that we currently have and with the expected revenue increases that we'll be getting through the initiatives.

That's the answer to your last question. On the MWBE question, as I mentioned, we are out there with our outreach programs, aggressively looking to

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2 certify more and more minority and women owned
3 businesses. We are using our mobile units. We're in
4 the Bronx today for example. We were in East Harlem
5 on Friday and we're reaching out the business owners
6 there as well to introduce them to MWBE certification
7 opportunities. The MWBE Online Directory, as I
8 mentioned, the revamping of it with very specific key
9 search word functions for example, has been really
10 helpful in connecting agencies to MWBE owners.

11 And then, I forget, you had one other question
12 related to the MWBE in the middle. You might just
13 repeat that.

14 JACKIE MALLON: You're on mute.

15 MAJORITY WHIP BROOKS-POWERS: Sorry about that.
16 Uhm, so I was asking in terms of the funding that the
17 agency is committing to Fiscal Year 2023 to continue
18 to support. But also, how does the exploration of
19 the pandemic related federal funding teams approach?

20 KEVIN KIM: Uh, like you, we are committed to
21 supporting our MWBE's in every manner possible. I
22 just wanted to point out that during Fiscal Year 2021
23 for example, we collaborated with local development
24 corporations, trade associations, with the Chamber,
25 and did 163 events to spread the word about MWBE

certification and the benefits of getting certified. We've also instituted an MWBE mentoring program. So, I feel like we have a robust programming that has been already performed and then the ones that are in the initiatives that will be supporting our MWBE programs through Fiscal Year 2023 and beyond.

MAJORITY WHIP BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so much for that and I look forward to working with you in your agency and making sure that you know, we're getting support for our MWBE's and our local small businesses across the city. So, thank you so much.

KEVIN KIM: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: So, thank you so much. At the moment, we don't see other hands raised by Council Members, so I do have more questions but if any of my colleagues want to jump in at any point, just please raise your hand and we will call on you.

So, another question I had Commissioner relates to BID funding. As you know, I've been a big proponent and I've spoken quite extensively over the past couple of months about the need to fund smaller BIDS, so that they can better market and promote their respective small businesses, so I'm thrilled that the Administration has included funding.

1
2 Could you speak a little bit about what those
3 plans are? Has funding been determined?

4 KEVIN KIM: Sure, so, you know thank you first of
5 all for your advocacy of the BIDs. You and I
6 definitely share the value that BIDs are the
7 connective tissue within commercial corridors
8 throughout the city and we both agree that all BIDs
9 need to get the support that they need. The bigger
10 bids and the smaller BIDs and in this particular
11 case, what the initiative, the new blueprint
12 initiative is going to implement is supporting the
13 smaller BIDs, the ones with under \$500,000 in budgets
14 because we all know that through the pandemic, one of
15 the data points show that the businesses within BID
16 quarter, it's a bigger BID quarters faired better
17 relatively better, than businesses that had no BIDs
18 or smaller BIDs. And so, to address the inequity, we
19 have to give all the adequate resources that all BIDs
20 need to be able to do what they do best, which is
21 support their local neighborhood commercial
22 corridors.

23 The actual dollar amount is still being worked
24 out and as soon as we have it we'll share that with
25 you but rest be assured that it will be adequate

resources that are needed to support the smaller
BIDs.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you and I would just
advocate for the largest amount possible. As you
know one of the main points and why I asked for this
funding to be allocated is because these smaller BIDs
are spending a far larger share on admin and
personnel than the larger BIDs that are better funded
and that can quite honestly put more money into
marketing and promoting their businesses.

So, we want to make sure that there is really BID
equity and that's what this request was really about.
So, thank you for honoring that and I look forward to
the details. So, a couple more questions that I
have, NYC and Company, obviously it's so important to
make sure that they are adequately funded. So, in
Fiscal 2022, for NYC and Company, the Adopted Budget
for the agency included \$25 million additional
funding for NYC and Company's Tourism Recovery
Campaign. This funding I noticed is not included in
the Fiscal 2023 plan. How is the additional funding
used in 2022? And do you believe that by not
including it in the 2023 plan, is it not included

1
2 because you all feel the economy and tourism is back
3 to prepandemic levels?

4 KEVIN KIM: Well, thank you for that question.

5 As I said in the testimony, the NYC Company funding
6 is just a pass through, so I think that question is
7 better directed to NYC and Co. But from SBS's point
8 of view, we believe that the promotion of small
9 business is critical and we've been doing our part.

10 As you know during the pandemic, we had a very
11 successful Shop Your Local Campaign. Something
12 you've also advocated as very important. We've done
13 your Shop Your City 30-day challenge. We have also
14 taken and supported our local manufacturing partners
15 and had them go online and sell PPE in a marketplace
16 that we helped to create through out Tech pipeline
17 program and our local manufacturing partners and we
18 know that all these kinds of small efforts to help
19 local businesses get online to sell their wares and
20 good and services is critical to helping them come
21 back and help the city come back stronger than ever
22 before.

23 So, for our part, we know that promotion of small
24 business is something that we'll always be focused on
25 and we're looking for more and more creative ways to

1
2 get the word out that you need to shop local to help
3 our city come back.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you yes, I couldn't
5 agree with that more and I have pushed NYC and
6 Company to do additional campaigns that are focused
7 on buy local, shop local, as well as speaking of
8 course to the administration about that as well
9 because I do believe that we need to increase the
10 funding for that.

11 Commercial Lease Assistance programs. So, the
12 Commercial Lease Assistance program is obviously a
13 vital program that small businesses need very much
14 right now. Can you talk a little bit about what the
15 funding is for this program in the preliminary
16 budget?

17 KEVIN KIM: Sure, uhm, in terms of the details of
18 the actual dollar amounts, I'll ask my First Deputy
19 Commissioner to answer that but just in terms of the
20 program metrics, some of the other metrics, I know in
21 Fiscal Year 2022, we served 292 unique businesses. I
22 think since the launch of this program back in
23 February 2018, we served over 1,000 unique businesses
24 and so, we know that one of the biggest challenges
25 every small business owner, retail business owner

1
2 faces, is the increase in rents and also in terms of
3 the complex leases that they have to face when
4 dealing with their landlords, so this program has
5 been so helpful in allowing small businesses to
6 somewhat level the playing field by getting pre-pro
7 bono legal assistance to have experts help negotiate
8 back rents that are lease terms and what not. So, in
9 terms of the actual dollar amounts, I'll turn it over
10 to my First Deputy please.

11 JACKIE MALLON: It's just a little bit over \$5
12 million.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And do you feel that the need
14 or demand for the — how has it changed during the
15 pandemic? If you can talk a little bit about that.

16 KEVIN KIM: I think that during the pandemic, the
17 need was even greater because people and the
18 businesses were in danger of closing and I think they
19 needed this kind of professional pro bono legal
20 service to be able to go in and negotiate with
21 landlords who are better equipped, better resourced.
22 And I think that store front vacancy is something
23 that you and I also share our concern that storefront
24 vacancies lead to a whole host of issues other than
25 just you know economic consequences, immediate

1
2 economic consequences but public safety and quality
3 of life issues.

4 So, I think that during the pandemic when
5 businesses were even in greater danger of closing,
6 that the commercial lease assistance was very helpful
7 in keeping some of the businesses open.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: And I see that my colleague
9 Council Member Mealy has her hand up, so I'm going to
10 call on her for questions.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Alright, I'm so sorry, how
14 are you? I was just wondering Commissioner and thank
15 you my colleague. This is a great hearing because we
16 need to make sure that the city get back to business.
17 How are we doing with marketing? Where if we have
18 open space and let vendors inside the space like a
19 flea market? Have we started doing anything such as
20 that? And that's really my main question.

21 KEVIN KIM: Well thank you for that question.
22 You know as you know the street vendors are critical
23 pathways of entrepreneurship and there's a street
24 vendor advisory board that was created last year to
25 address the various issues. That advisory board I

1
2 know is hard at work and will release its
3 recommendations soon. But to give you a little
4 preview from what I know, uhm, they've been working
5 on trying to find new vending opportunities on city
6 property but they're also looking at balancing the
7 concerns and interests of the various stakeholders
8 including brick and mortar stores.

9 So, there's a lot of discussion still going on
10 and I think that's something more I'll leave to the
11 advisory board to release its recommendations
12 directly to you but that's my understanding of what's
13 going on currently.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Alright, if I have a space
15 in my – a couple of spaces in my district, I will
16 have to speak to the advisory board in regards to see
17 how we can maybe have half the size as maybe a
18 grocery store and then next is a vendor. Because
19 people have become entrepreneurs since the pandemic.
20 Now, this is a brick and mortar place and if it's
21 been vacant and it's owned by the city, why not let
22 the people utilize it?

23 So, who should I speak to to get that rolling?

24 KEVIN KIM: Yeah, so as you know this
25 administration is fully committed to working with

1
2 partners like you in government and with the
3 communities to discuss potential siding locations.
4 And so, we will follow up with you and connect you to
5 the appropriate people to discuss this.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I'm looking forward to
7 that. Thank you so much and thank you Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you Council Member and
9 I don't see any other hands from fellow Council
10 Members, so I am just going to make a quick closing
11 statement to close the administration portion of the
12 questioning.

13 I first of all, want to thank you Commissioner
14 for your testimony today. I think it's so important
15 this blueprint that the Administration has released.
16 I look forward to getting more details with the
17 specific funding because as I said in my opening
18 statement and in my line of questioning, I was very
19 concerned about the reduction in federal funding.
20 It's obviously very disappointing for our restaurants
21 and other small businesses that there has not been
22 additional allocation of federal funding.

23 So, I think now the onus is on the city to
24 explain a lot of that, and so, I look forward to
25 getting the details from you in terms of that. So,

1
2 we are now going to move straight into the public
3 testimony, so I'm just going to re-gavel [GAVEL] and
4 we're going to now open the public testimony and now,
5 I'm going to turn it over to our Counsel to call on
6 members of the public who can offer their testimony.
7 Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Chair.
9 Thank you so much everyone. We will proceed with
10 public testimony now. I am Stephanie Jones and I am
11 Counsel to the New York City's Council's Committee on
12 Small Business. Panelists, as a reminder you will be
13 on mute until it is time for you to testify. At
14 which time, your name will be called and you will be
15 unmuted by the Zoom host. If you mute yourself after
16 you have been muted, you will need to be muted again
17 by the host.

18 Please wait for the Sergeant at Arms to tell you
19 when your time begins. The Sergeant will then let
20 you know when your time is up. As a reminder, you
21 have two minutes for your testimony.

22 We will now hear from Urgen Sherpa followed by
23 Angelica Novoa and then Michaela Skoknic. Urgen.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
25

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Since Urgen has not responded yet to the unmute request, we will follow with the next public witness.

URGEN SHERPA: Yeah, I'm here.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Oh, yeah, please proceed.

URGEN SHERPA: Good afternoon. My name is Urgen Sherpa and I'm from Chhaya CDC, Chhaya is the power, housing instability and economic wellbeing of South Asian and Indo Caribbean communities in New York City.

I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today. Chhaya is also a member of United for a Small Business NYC, USBNYC. Today, I am representing USBNYC.

USBNYC is a coalition of community organizations across New York City fighting to protect New York's small businesses and nonresidential tenants from the threat of displacement with particular focus on owner operated low-income people of color run businesses that serve low-income communities and communities of color.

The small businesses are cornerstones of our city and neighborhood. They provide jobs, culturally

relevant good and services and community keeping our neighborhood a thriving and vibrant place to live.

USBNYC members include legal and other direct service providers as well as merchant organizing and advocacy organizations. And through our members, we reach thousands of small businesses of all kinds throughout New York City. Throughout the past two years, the small business owners in our networks have faced a significant need for direct funding that remains largely unaddressed by federal, state and city programs.

In addition to opening up more grant programs, the existing resources and support services must be expanded. In order for that, funding to reach those with the most critical need planning for full equitable small business recovery must include insignificant funding to address these gaps. We urge you to one, provide significant direct small business relief funding. Two, expand the commercial lease assistance program to include nonprofit organizations.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

URGEN SHERPA: And other commercial tenancy matters. And make the CLA program permanent with CLA

1
2 grant. Support the enhancement of Worker Corporation
3 Business Development initiative to five million four
4 thousands and five hundred fifty two dollars. Fund
5 community-based organizations engaging in merchant
6 organizing and outreach effort. Increase
7 accessibility to SBS services for limited English
8 proficiency immigrant, small business owners by
9 expanding language capacity within the agency. Thank
10 you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
12 inviting to testify Angelica Novoa followed by
13 Michaela Skoknic and then Alex Grzebyk. Angelica.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

15 ANGELICA NOVOA: Good afternoon. My name is
16 Angelica Novoa, I'm the Director of Training and
17 Education at New Immigrant Community Empowerment
18 Alliance.

19 We are grateful to share testimony on behalf of
20 our organization and the thousands of immigrant, day
21 laborers and families in New York City. We urge the
22 City Council to invest in the Day Laborer Workforce
23 Initiative, the low-wage worker support and the
24 construction site safety training to continue the
25 work that organizations such as NICE provides to over

15,000 immigrant workers per years. Day laborers, especially newly arrived immigrants and women work in some of the most unsafe and unrelated industry.

They experience rampant wage theft, pervasive construction accidents, unchecked workplace hazards and lack of access to free in Spanish and culturally dignified training. This is particularly true for older workers and women who are transitioning from domestic work to construction.

And Day Laborer corners known as [INAUDIBLE 50:05], day laborers also lack access to workforce development training and access to shelter, water, bathrooms, and other basic necessities. The goal of the Day Laborer Workforce Initiative is to work together with NICE and other job centers and address these issues by connecting workers to critical services. Providing training, leading wage safe clinical legal clinics, facilitating access to good jobs and most importantly, creating safe, dignified spaces for day laborers looking for a job. The services we provide at NICE are more essential now than ever before.

Every year over 7,500 workers use NICE job centers during the morning shift and NICE dispatches

1
2 over 1,200 jobs per year. Only in the last two years
3 our membership has increased up to 12,000 members
4 because of the pandemic. This past year, more than
5 3,200 workers participated in our construction site
6 safety training and our professional development of
7 skilled training, which includes –

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 ANGELICA NOVOA: Painting, plumbing, demolition,
10 framing, digital literacy, [INAUDIBLE 51:17] and
11 apprenticeship programs. One-third of the
12 participants were women.

13 Through our partnership with SBS and the site
14 safety training under Local Law 196, NICE has
15 provided over 2,000 SD cards to our members and
16 continue to empower them to use the new Training
17 Connect Card.

18 Additionally, our NICE centers refer
19 approximately 1,500 people to critical services
20 including health clinics, registration to NYC Care,
21 legal services, financial services, among others.
22 Since the onset of the pandemic, partnering with MOIA
23 and other agencies, NICE has distributed more than
24 \$3.3 million in direct cash relief, close to 200,000
25

meals and grocery packages to help fight the growing hunger among immigrant workers.

We urge the Council to continue investing in the Day Laborer Workforce Initiative, the low-wage worker support, the construction site safety training, to empower thousands of day laborers, women and men in the construction industry and fight for the dignity and their economic recovery. In particularly, we urge the Council to renew and expand the Day Laborer Workforce Initiative Coalition Budget for Year 2023 to fight for \$4 million. To expand the access to workforce development and training opportunities for immigrants, day laborer centers and low-income New Yorkers.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. If you could wrap it up a little bit just to keep the testimonies from being long because we've got a lot of people. My apologies but if you could wrap it up. Thank you.

ANGELINA NOVOA: Yeah, I only have two more phrases. We also urge the Council to renew and expand the site safety training funding under Local Law 196. Thank you for your consideration and time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much. Next, we'll be calling Michaela Skoknic followed by Alex Grzebyk and then Jingying Zhai. Michaela.

MICHAELA GRZEBYK: Thank you. Can you hear me?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can hear you.

MICHAELA SKOKNIC: Perfect, thank you. Good afternoon Chairperson Menin and members of the Small Business Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Michaela Skoknic and I'm speaking on behalf of the Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation.

SBIDC is a mission driven nonprofit that has been supporting industrial businesses and the workforce along the working waterfronts of Sunset Park, Red Hook and Gowanus for over 40 years. I am asking the Council to restore and extend funding for the industrial business service provider program IBSP in the Small Business Services Budget so the essential businesses in our industrial business zone can continue to thrive, grow, and help lead a more just economic recovery from the pandemic.

As an IDSP, our organization provides a wide range of free business of free support services so

1
2 that industrial firms can continue to do business in
3 Brooklyn. We help businesses access financing, find
4 new spaces to operate, navigate city agencies and
5 help register MWBE's. We also play a critical role
6 in connecting industrial and manufacturing businesses
7 to each other, fostering a local ecosystem of
8 economic benefits for the neighborhood and helping to
9 keep production jobs in Brooklyn.

10 Finally, we offer educational courses and
11 workshops to MWBE's to help them stay resilient,
12 expand their sales and job offerings and grow their
13 revenue. SBIDC also runs the New York City Workforce
14 One Center at the Brooklyn Army terminal to help
15 match businesses with local residents looking for
16 employment.

17 And in 2021, we responded to a growing skills gap
18 in the manufacturing sector by launching a young
19 adult job training program to create career pathways
20 in the industrial sector. In a city where affordable
21 accessible industrial land is scarce, organizations
22 like ours are a key component to business retention,
23 which is critical to an equitable economic strategy.

24 The industrial sector face higher wages and
25 offers more career opportunities to a workforce that

is 80 percent people of color and 50 percent foreign borne.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

MICHAELA SKOKNIC: Thank you. Additionally, the businesses we serve are a key to the city's ability to respond to emergencies. As an example, since the pandemic, we have helped serve MWBE business government manufacturers people to create PPE.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Please wrap up, thank you.

MICHAELA SKOKNIC: I'm wrapping up right now. Uhm, so SBADC has helped almost current business to almost \$4 million in funding and we have provided free assistance to over 200 firms. Appropriate levels for funding for the IDC program will ensure that we are able to serve the many businesses that rely upon us for support and counseling and industrial businesses keep New York City running. Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'll be calling on Alex Grzebyk followed by Jingying Zhai and then Marie Rene Cita. Alex.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

ALEX GRZEBYK: Good afternoon. My name is Alex Grzebyk and I am a Staff Attorney at Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, known as Brooklyn A. I currently represent 15 small businesses through Brooklyn A's Commercial Lease Assistance Program, funded by New York City Department of Small Business Services.

The Commercial Lease Assistance Program, CLA provides high quality attorney's free of cost to New York City small businesses. I personally came to work with Brooklyn A because I wanted to directly serve those in my community that exhibited the greatest needs for affordable and high-quality legal services. CLA is a lifesaver for my clients. My clients are parents, caretakers, siblings, friends and community members and impact every facet of New York City's economy.

I would like to share the story of my client, who I will refer to as ART GALLERY. My client came to us with rent arrears totaling over \$110,000. With the business hemorrhaging and trying to stay afloat amidst a global pandemic, I negotiated a waiver of \$61,000 in rent arrears, an affordable repayment plan for the remaining arrears and a tenant friendly lease

1
2 amendment that would ensure that my client would stay
3 in its commercial space for the remainder of its
4 lease term.

5 The future of CLA must be a certainty for New
6 York City's small businesses like Art Gallery. As
7 the face of CLA I have three key asks: One, CLA
8 needs to be a permanent service for the New York
9 City's small business owners. It a critical
10 resource, and lifeline, for all our small businesses.
11 Two, our impact depends on the tools of leverage
12 available to us. We need a grant embedded into CLA,
13 so that we may give our small business owners the
14 financial leverage they need. And three, when
15 considering legislation that affects residential
16 tenants, let us do our part in ensuring that
17 commercial tenants get afforded similar protections
18 so that our small businesses, the very backbone of
19 this city, remain for years to come.

20 I hope Art Gallery's story provides a better
21 understanding of the need for making permanent and
22 growing with Brooklyn A, this legal assistance
23 program for our small business owners. Brooklyn A's
24 CLA partnership with SBS is the only program of its
25 kind in the nation. New York City is a trailblazer in

city support for small businesses and CLA's an irresistible resources for our small businesses. I thank you for your time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'll be calling Jingying Zhai followed by Marie Rene Cita and then Melat Seyoum. Jingying.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

JINGYING ZHAI: Thank you. Good afternoon, my name is Jingying Zhai. I am a Staff Attorney at Brooklyn Legal Service Corporation A, knows as BKA. I have represented 33 small business owners through BKA's Commercial Lease Assistance Program funded by New York City Department of Small Business Service.

My clients speak Spanish, Korean, Chinese and many other languages and we provide service in every language. I would like to share the story of my client, who I will refer to as BROOKLYN TATTOO, It is a very popular tattoo shop that has been in business for ten years. However, when COVID-19 hit, Brooklyn Tattoo was forced to shut down for an extended period of time. When Brooklyn Tattoo sought BKA's assistance, the owner had already packed its equipment and arranged a moving company to permanently close.

1
2 I represented the Brooklyn Tattoo and helped
3 with: One, a review its lease, rights and
4 obligations under their commercial lease; two, I
5 negotiated rental concessions with the landlord using
6 grant funding as an upfront payment, in exchange the
7 landlord waiving Brooklyn Tattoo's arrears and
8 reducing its rent for an additional year.

9 Brooklyn Tattoo cancelled the moving company,
10 unpacked its equipment and today Brooklyn Tattoo
11 continues to make its mark. The future of CLA must
12 be a certainty for NYC small businesses like Brooklyn
13 Tattoo. As the face of CLA I have two key asks:
14 One, the CLA needs to be a permanent service, it is a
15 critical resource, and lifeline, for all our small
16 businesses. Two, our small businesses depend on us
17 to provide the tools of leverage. They approach the
18 bargaining table with nothing and we need a grant
19 embedded into CLA, so that we may give our small
20 business owners the financial leverage they need.

21 I thank this Committee for your time and your
22 continued support of my team at Brooklyn A. Thank
23 you.
24
25

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'd like to call Marie Rene Cita followed by Melat Sayoum and then Julian McKinley. Marie.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

MARIE RENE CITA: Good afternoon. My name is Marie Cita and I am a Staff Attorney at Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, also known as BROOKLYN A.

I have represented over 50 small business owners through Brooklyn A's Commercial Lease Assistance Program, which provides high quality attorneys, free of cost to New York City small businesses in any language under the sun. I came to work at Brooklyn A in the midst of the pandemic because I believed, and continue to believe, that a just economic recovery is critical to maintaining the fabric of New York City; and I know that small businesses are the backbone of a fair and equitable economy. CLA is a lifesaver for my clients. My clients are community cornerstones. They are employers. They are neighbors, parents, grandparents, caretakers, siblings, friends, and community members.

More importantly, they are why New York City is one of the most dynamic cities in the world. I will

1
2 share the story of one of my clients, who I will
3 refer to as MANHATTAN DRYCLEANERS. It's owner is an
4 immigrant and before the pandemic, they decided to
5 open up a dry-cleaning business and laundromat to
6 supplement their retirement income. They just simply
7 didn't have enough to retire without doing so.
8 However, the pandemic hit and their business
9 plummeted and at certain points was barely 25 percent
10 of its pre-pandemic levels.

11 So, instead of being a financial support, the
12 business became a liability. Manhattan Dry Cleaner
13 racked up over \$150,000 in commercial rent arrears.
14 And what's more, like so many New York City small
15 businesses, the business owner personally guaranteed
16 the lease obligations. So, as a result, the business
17 owner was facing bankruptcy as well as the prospect
18 of having to close down.

19 I represented a Manhattan Dry Cleaner and helped
20 them negotiate the waiver of over half of their
21 arrears and helped them negotiate a payment plan for
22 the remaining arrears. I also assisted them in
23 applying for the Storefront Rent Relief Grant.
24 Today, my client is still in business.
25

The future of CLA must be a certainty for New York City small businesses –

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

JINGYING ZHAI: I have three key asks. First, CLA needs to be a permanent service for our New York City's small business. Second, because our impact depends on the leverage we have, we ask that a grant be permanently embedded within the CLA program.

Finally, CLA services should be expanded to New York City non-profit enterprises, which like our small businesses, serve, support and employ so many New Yorkers. I thank this Committee for its time and its continued support.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'll be calling on to testify Melat Seyoum followed by Julian McKinley and then Shelly Miller. Melat.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

MELAT SEYOUM: Thank you honorable Chairperson and distinguished members of the New York City Council on Small Businesses. My name is Melat Seyoum and I'm the Worker Co-op Policy Advocate for the New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives, also known as NYCNWC.

1
2 The local trade association representing worker
3 cooperative businesses and democratic workplace in
4 New York City metropolitan area. I am here alongside
5 my colleagues from the Democracy at Work Institute,
6 the ICA group, Worker's Justice Project, and NYCNWC
7 Advocacy Council, representing nine other
8 organizations that make up the Worker Cooperative
9 Business Development Initiative, asking New York City
10 Council to continue supporting the expansion of
11 worker ownership in next years budget and firmly into
12 the future.

13 Since the inception of the initiative, we have
14 created over 175 new cooperative businesses and
15 approximately 1,000 new jobs that are not only
16 providing higher hourly wages but also building
17 wealth and assets for individuals who are
18 overwhelmingly BIPOC women and immigrants. We have
19 seen first hand how the initiative has served to
20 bolster our sector, strike the existing cooperative
21 businesses and creating new ones, which are
22 overwhelmingly immigrant and women owned.

23 The initiative partners have collectively worked
24 to create a comprehensive ecosystem of support for
25 cooperative businesses that not only ensures the

creation of new cooperatives in low-income areas but also the technical assistance needed to sustain businesses and create jobs, as well as the education and outreach needed for communities interested entrepreneurs and allied organizations.

We ask the City Council to enhance our funding to \$5 million in order for us to double down on the essential long-term economic recovery for our cooperative businesses that we need for us to claw ourselves out of this pandemic crisis.

We thank the City Council for the opportunity to testify and we hope that you consider our budget priorities and recommendations during this years budget negotiation process. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'd like to call to testify Julian McKinley followed by Shelly Miller and then Matthew Shapiro. Julian, please proceed.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Times starts.

JULIAN MCKINLEY: Thank you so much. Good afternoon to the Chair and distinguished members of the New York City Council Committee on Small Businesses. It's always an honor to address you and especially in honor today as I submit testimony in

support of the hardworking individuals and families in our community.

My name is Julian McKinley and I am a Senior Director of Communication at the Democracy at Work Institute, also known as DAWI by our close partners. And on behalf of DAWI and the 14 organizations that make up WCBDI, the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative, we want to thank you for the opportunity to speak about economic development in our communities and worker cooperatives unique ability to establish, grow and retain community wealth.

Since 2014, your support has helped WCBDI transform this potential into real change for working families in our communities. As Melat just mentioned, we have been incredibly impactful over those years, having created more than a 1,000 jobs and pathways to business ownership, reaching 9,000 entrepreneurs with education and technical assistance services. Having created over 175 new worker owned businesses and they are providing higher hourly wages, better working conditions, often safer conditions especially during COVID and building wealth and equity for workers.

1
2 In our role as a national organization DAWI, to
3 create expanded access to worker ownership for
4 communities who are affected by economic and social
5 injustice, we conduct an annual census of firms,
6 monitoring growth and the sector, identify trends
7 successes and challenges. And I share this because
8 this work gives us a unique view, a birds eye
9 assessment really, combined with an intimate approach
10 to supporting workers and aspiring worker owners in
11 New York City. And in the past eight years, the City
12 Council's deep committed support, with that support
13 the WCBDI has worked to build a comprehensive
14 ecosystem that has brought new jobs to communities
15 that are most in need. We've brought successful
16 local businesses and provided the technical
17 assistance, the education and outreach that's needed
18 to ensure business success.

19 As a result, New York City now continues to be
20 the largest—

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 JULIAN MCKINLEY: Ecosystem in the U.S. It's home
23 to Cooperative Homecare Associates, which is the
24 largest worker owned business in the U.S. as well and
25 the city has become a model for equitable economic

development through its support of Worker Cooperative Development.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Julian. Please wrap up please. Thank you.

JULIAN MCKINLEY: Yup, thank you so much. We do ask that you continue to support us. Worker co-ops are economical sound in providing a much better path to business ownership than conventional businesses and thank you for your support.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'd like to call Shelley Miller to testify followed by Matthew Shapiro and then Yesenia Mata. Shelley.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SHELLEY MILLER: Good afternoon and thank you honorable Chairperson Julie Menin, distinguished Committee Members and your staff. I really appreciate this time to speak to you. I am the Senior Outreach Manager for the ICA Group and we're members of the Worker Cooperative to this development initiative formerly known or informally known as WCBDI.

I testify in support of the WCBDI's ask today and to ask you to continue to support the initiative. As part of the WCBDI, ICA focuses on converting

1 conventional businesses into workers cooperatives.
2 We do this to increase work of voice, work of wealth,
3 and work of power. We also seek to prevent local
4 small business closures and the result in loss of
5 jobs. When we convert businesses to worker
6 cooperatives in additional saving firms and jobs, we
7 reward small business owners for the blood and sweat
8 they spent building businesses over many years.
9 Rather than walking away with little or nothing from
10 liquidating the business, we work with the owners to
11 determine a fair market value for the business and
12 retiring owners get to take away a nest egg to
13 support them in their retirement when they sell to
14 their workers.
15

16 During the last Fiscal Year, ICA converted eight
17 small New York City businesses that employ 76
18 employees and have already added some additional
19 employees. These businesses exist in all the
20 communities throughout New York City and include
21 manufacturing, communications, retail sales,
22 healthcare and engineering firms. Through the
23 initiative, the continue to receive technical
24 assistance from ICA to ensure their success. The new
25 worker owners have diversified the ownership of these

firms to members from different racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds.

This shift in demographics helps to close the racial wealth gap, which is one our goals. ICA's technical assistance also includes training the new worker owners in operating a democratic –

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

SHELLEY MILLER: Workplace and encourages them to actively engage in the civic democratic process as part of the broader community of cooperative businesses. We're pleased to say that both worker owners and the business owners have fostered our work under the initiative invaluable. Thank you for the time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Shelly. Next, we'd like to call Matthew Shapiro to testify followed by Yesenia Mata and then Valerie White. Matthew.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MATTHEW SHAPIRO: Hi, my name is Matthew and I am the Legal Director of the Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center. The Street Vendor Project is a membership-based organization of over 2,000, mostly immigrant, street vendors who work in New York City's public space selling food and merchandise. We

organize vendors to have their voices heard as well as provide legal and small business assistance.

We respectfully requests funding to sustain and expand two critical programs that serve street vendors, New York City's smallest businesses. The first is the Community Outreach and Education Program; and the second is the Small Business Consultation Programs. These programs will support an equitable economic recovery for New York City.

Through the Community Outreach and Education Program, we conduct multilingual outreach on the streets to vendors in person to educate them on the rules and regulations of vending, teach them their legal rights and responsibilities and connect them to a variety of resources ranging from public health to immigration. Through our Small Business Consultation Program, we provide multi-lingual legal and small business services to vendors throughout the city.

Such services include: Business Compliance and Digital Literacy, personal finances for Small Businesses, marketing, and our legal services include: Advisement on the vending laws and rules, sales tax assistance, licensing and permitting application assistance, free legal representation

1 before the OATH tribunal on administrative summons,
2 and representation in New York State and Federal
3 Courts for street vending related litigation.
4

5 The Street Vendor Project is currently the only
6 organization in the New York City that provides lead
7 services for New York City Street Vendors. In 2021,
8 we provided assistance on over 375 cases for street
9 vendors receiving legal and small business
10 assistance. Funding will allow us to keep current
11 staff through the small business consultation
12 program, SVP's women and BIPOC Business Empowerment
13 organizer will lead the program to provide essential
14 small business training and the legal -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 MATTHEW SHAPIRO: Director will provide
17 oversight. With the New York City Council support,
18 we will sustain and expand these programs. Thank you
19 for the opportunity to testify today.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Matthew and before
21 we continue, we'd like to acknowledge that CM
22 Krishnan has joined us, Council Member Krishnan.
23 Okay, so next we will call to testify Yesenia Mata
24 followed by Valerie White and then Julia Currie.
25 Yesenia.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

YESENIA MATA: Hi, my name Arlette Cepeda on behalf of Yesenia Mata, I'm the Deputy Director of La Colmena. We are a day laborer and immigrants rights organization based in Staten Island and we form part of the Day Laborer Coalition. I want to thank Chairwoman Menin and the rest of the Committee for holding this important hearing but also want to thank specifically Chairwoman Menin for her incredible work with the census. We had a wonderful opportunity to collaborate, so thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

YESENIA MATA: I wanted to highlight all the work that La Colmena has done during the pandemic but due to time, we are unable to do that but we do want to emphasize that our work has helped save lives during the pandemic. La Colmena was and still is in the frontlines. We have provided Staten Islanders with food, COVID vaccines, PPE for small businesses, and gas distributions and in addition to providing job dispatching, workforce development and training opportunities to day laborers. Our centers have become our first responders to emergencies.

1
2 But uhm, this seems uhm, it seems that the
3 coalition is being forgotten or ignored because we
4 say this because our city contracts are still pending
5 registration. So, right now, the city, we have
6 accrued over half a million dollars' worth of work
7 that has not been registered and we are only able to
8 invoice for and it's making us almost at the brink of
9 closing our doors.

10 We have been able to maintain our doors open,
11 thanks to the support, so we are asking the
12 Commission to please advocate in our behalf of our
13 colleagues to make sure that our contracts get
14 registered and that we get paid for the work that we
15 do on behalf of the city. So, that continues to
16 support and provide work and support to our
17 immigrants communities.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 YESENIA MATA: Uhm, okay, just to finalize, I
20 just want to make sure that we don't forget that our
21 immigrant communities are the ones that are going to
22 bring equity in New York City's recovery. Thank you
23 for your time.
24
25

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for testifying.

Next, we will call to testify Valerie White followed by Julia Currie and then Scott Bamberger. Valerie.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

VALERIE WHITE: Hi, my name is Valerie White, I am the Executive Director of LISC New York City. A community development nonprofit committed to close the racial wealth gap and creating a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable New York to investment in community and economic development infrastructure and initiatives.

Thank you to Chair Menin and the rest of the Committee for the opportunity to testify and thank you to New York City SBS for their ongoing and longstanding partnership.

On behalf of the hundreds of minority owned businesses for whom we advocate and provide grant funding and programming here, are three considerations I want to highlight today. One, it's critical that the budget includes comprehensive funding for innovative relief for support, to support minority owned small businesses attempting to recover from the pandemic. Financial relief of course needs to be disbursed to struggling small businesses

1
2 immediately but relief programs must also ensure that
3 these minority owned businesses have the long-term
4 support, services, resources, networks and technical
5 assistance that they need to operate across business
6 well into the future.

7 Second, I want to make clear, the importance of
8 continued support for the \$100 million New York City
9 Small Business Resiliency Grant, which is providing
10 BIPOC owned businesses crucial funding. These
11 businesses make up the economic culture and social
12 backbone of low and moderate income neighborhoods and
13 without them, the future of countless commercial
14 corridors will be jeopardized in commercial blight
15 will take over for far too many minority
16 neighborhoods, forcing longstanding residents and
17 businesses out.

18 Finally, the MWBE leadership association must
19 continue to serve a pivotal role in enhancing the
20 capacity of MWBE's in all sectors of New York's
21 economy. This program helps increase the
22 competitiveness of MWBE's bidding for public –

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 VALERIE WHITE: Connects them with appropriate
25 financing and generally allows them these business

enterprises to play a big role in the economy. At LISC New York City, we stand ready to partner with Chair Menin, the members of the Committee and New York City SBS to stand up the needed support for New York City small minority owned businesses as the budget negotiation proceeds. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Valerie. Next, we'd like to call Julia Currie followed by Scott Bamberger, and then Catherine Murcek. Julia.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

JULIA CURRIE: Thank you Chair Menin and members of the Committee. My name is Julia Currie, and I am a Staff Attorney with the Volunteers of Legal Service, VOLS, Microenterprise Project.

VOLS was established in 1984 and our purpose is to leverage private attorneys to provide free legal services to low-income New Yorkers to help fill the justice gap. For over 20 years the VOLS Microenterprise Project has helped existing and aspiring small business owners and microentrepreneurs access high-quality free legal services from our dedicated staff and our network of pro bono attorneys. For many New Yorkers, owning a small

business is an effective path out of poverty and into financial stability and independence.

VOLS provides assistance with drafting contracts, reviewing government documents, protecting intellectual property, and advising on commercial leases among other issue areas. We partner with community and economic development organizations to connect with clients who would benefit from our legal assistance, focusing on minority, women, immigrant, and veteran-owned businesses. We conduct legal educational programs for small business owners throughout the city and advocate for the small business community through our participation in community outreach and small business coalitions.

VOLS is one of a small handful of legal organizations offering direct legal assistance to small businesses owners and microentrepreneurs in New York City, who otherwise would not be able to afford legal representation. We would like to thank the New York City Council for the support provided to the VOLS Microenterprise Project through the Neighborhood Development Grant Initiative. I joined VOLS in February 2020, about three weeks before our city shut down due to the COVID pandemic.

1
2 In those initial weeks of uncertainty, the small
3 business community was in crisis. The VOLS
4 Microenterprise Project was a resource for our
5 clients, leading know your rights trainings and
6 producing guides for small business owners on the
7 impact of the virus and the mandatory restrictions on
8 or closures of their businesses. Since March 2020,
9 our team has served hundreds of small businesses in
10 great need in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

11 As we emerge from the Pandemic and the city
12 continues to reopen, small businesses, both
13 established and new will need legal services. VOLS is
14 a unique resource in that we are able to provide
15 full-scale business services to our small business
16 clients free of charge.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 JULIA CURRIE: We cannot do this work for the New
19 York City small businesses without your support and
20 partnership. Thank you for your steadfast
21 championing of the New York City small business
22 community.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'd like
24 to call Scott Bamberger to testify, followed by Ruth
25 Lopez Martinez and then Maria Valdez. Scott.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SCOTT BAMBERGER: Yes, thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Scott Bamberger and I am a Staff Attorney at Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, known as Brooklyn A.

In the last two months, I have represented over 35 business owners through the Brooklyn A's Commercial Lease Assistance Program, funded by New York City Department of Small Business Services. My clients have spoken a variety of languages including, Spanish, French, and Russian. I came to work at Brooklyn A because of my interest in working with small business owners. I quickly learned that Brooklyn A's CLA program was providing a necessary service in an area of law that has consistently treated low-income small business owners inequitably.

I wanted to take the time today to share a client's story, a client I will call the "Tavern". The Tavern came to Brooklyn A with more than \$100,000 in arrears, a lapsed liquor license, and issues obtaining a valid certificate of occupancy, a responsibility allocated to the Tavern in the lease. The Tavern did not have the funds to pay the arrears nor the ability to obtain a valid liquor license or

1
2 the certificate of occupancy. Unfortunately, the
3 Tavern was in a position many small business owners
4 find themselves in. They need to operate to obtain
5 the funds to pay arrears, but they cannot operate
6 without the proper licenses. I represented the
7 Tavern and helped them negotiate a waiver of nearly
8 60 percent of the arrears by offering an upfront
9 payment with a grant.

10 Additionally, the landlord agreed to share the
11 cost of obtaining the certificate of occupancy and a
12 termination option for the Tavern, if they could not
13 obtain a valid liquor license. While the Tavern
14 received the benefits of our services, many small
15 business owners face these landlords alone. To
16 change this, the future of CLA must be a certainty
17 for New York City small businesses like the Tavern.
18 As the face of CLA, I have three key asks: First,
19 CLA needs to be a permanent service for New York
20 City's small business owners. It's a critical
21 resource for all our small businesses.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 SCOTT BAMBERGER: Okay, just two more. So,
24 second, a grant embedded into CLA program. And
25

third, 3. CLA should be expanded to non-profits. I appreciate the time today.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'd like to call to testify Ruth Lopez Martinez followed by Maria Valdez and then Justin Scoggins. Ruth.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

RUTH LOPEZ MARTINEZ: [SPEAKING IN OTHER LANGUAGE 1:23:49-1:25:40].

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Gracias Ruth. Uh, we will move on to our next public witness, we'd like to call Maria Valdez followed by Justin Scoggins and then Camryn Jung. Maria.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

MARIA VALDEZ: Hi good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity for testifying today. My name is Maria Valdez, I'm here representing the Workers Justice Project. I am testifying on behalf of the essential workers who are day laborers, cleaners and delivery workers for the City of New York. As we reinvent and renew our city's economy, we urge the Council to demonstrate its commitment to reveal to life the economy by investing \$5.355 million in the Day Laborer Workforce Initiative and \$1.5 million in deliverista's hubs. Day Laborers and delivery

workers are vital to the recovery of small businesses.

Workers Justice Project is committed to working with the City of New York in developing career pathways for construction workers, cleaners and delivery workers by enabling them to obtain critical occupations and leadership skills through onsite training. At the WJP Day Laborer Center, workers collectively set the wage floor at \$20 per hour but wages could go up to \$20 per hour. The center makes itself appealing to responsible employers by connecting them with skilled and trained workforce that is often neglected from New York City's traditional workforce development services because employers know and trust that workers can provide skilled labor and being trained and access, they're willing to pay higher wages.

The center also plays a role of to [INAUDIBLE 1:27:41] the local economy, creating over \$1 million in revenue every year through increased wages. Through the Day Laborer Center, workers have been able to increase their salaries by 30 to 40 percent. We are proud to be building a city that values the confusion of the day laborers, delivery workers and

1
2 cleaners by investing in a meaningful workforce
3 development infrastructure through the –

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 MARIA VALDEZ: Day Laborer Workforce Initiative
6 and Deliverista's Hub. We hope that you will
7 continue to make commitment to lead the nation to
8 fight the workers rights and workforce development
9 inclusion. Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
11 We will now call to testify Justin Scoggins followed
12 by Camryn Jung and then Thidar Kyaw. Justin.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 JUSTIN SCOGGINS: Good afternoon. Uhm, I was
15 recommended to CLA by Lloyd and I have a small
16 business that I started at the very beginning of the
17 pandemic before we knew it was a pandemic. So, I was
18 not open for business and I was indirectly affected
19 by COVID. I have rent arrears up to \$7,500 and
20 they've been walking me through it as of recently.

21 I have no prior experience with opening a
22 business before and uhm, I just thank you for your
23 help and they are helping me so I won't lose my
24 livelihood and I was not able to get an SCBA loan
25 because I was not open before COVID happened and now,

1
2 I'm struggling with that and yeah, these guys are
3 holding my hand, walking me through the process and
4 giving me advise I never would have had. So, yes,
5 thank you very much and I just hope that you continue
6 to support us.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony
8 Justin.

9 JUSTIN SCOGGINS: Yup.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now call to testify
11 Camryn Jung followed by Thidar Kyaw and then Andy
12 Bowen. Camryn.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 CAMRYN JUNG: Thank you. Good afternoon. My
15 name is Camryn Jung and I am a Staff Attorney at
16 Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, known as
17 BROOKLYN A. Right now I am representing eight
18 businesses through Brooklyn A's Commercial Lease
19 Assistance Program, funded by New York City
20 Department of Small Business Services. My clients
21 speak French, Spanish, and many other languages and
22 Brooklyn A ensures services are available in all
23 languages.

24 I came to work with Brooklyn A because I wanted
25 to use my legal knowledge and skills to assist

1
2 individuals going through the most difficult times in
3 their lives. CLA is the lifeline for my clients. My
4 clients are parents, caretakers, siblings, friends
5 and community members, and impact every facet of New
6 York City's economy.

7 I would like to share the story of my client, who
8 I will refer to as BROOKLYN RESTAURANT. Brooklyn
9 Restaurant is a Spanish speaking business owner, came
10 to Brooklyn A, with thousands of dollars in arrears
11 and was unable to communicate with their landlord who
12 sought eviction. I was able to negotiate with the
13 landlord and set up an affordable payment plan with
14 zero percent interest that benefited both parties.

15 Without CLA, Brooklyn Restaurant would presently
16 be in court. Instead, Brooklyn Restaurant is open
17 today and continuing to boost the New York City
18 economy. The future of CLA must be a certainty for
19 New York City's small businesses like Brooklyn
20 Restaurant. As the face of CLA I have three key
21 asks: One, CLA needs to be a permanent service for
22 the New York City's small business owners. It a
23 critical resource, and lifeline, for all our small
24 businesses.

Two, CLA clients are some of the most vulnerable small business populations and often approach the negotiation table with nothing. We need effective tools to bring landlords to the negotiation table. We need a grant embedded in CLA, so that we may give our small business owners the financial leverage they need.

Three, CLA should be expanded to include New York City non-profits. They are critical to this city's economy and are closing at alarmingly high rates. I hope New York City restaurant's story provides a better understanding of the need for making permanent and growing with Brooklyn A, with legal assistance program for our small business owners.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

CARMRYN JUNG: Brooklyn A's CLA partnership with SBS is the only program of its kind in the nation. Thank you for your time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'd like to call Thidar Kyaw to testify followed by Andy Bowen and then Shee Green(SP?). Thidar.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

THIDAR KYAW: Thank you. I am speaking on behalf of our client Thidar Kyaw, a business owner of Little

1
2 Myanmar in Manhattan. Ms. Kyaw's statement is the
3 following.

4 I originally had an Asian Mart and Deli market in
5 Queens but unfortunately, my store was destroyed in
6 the fire of 2020. I did not receive any insurance
7 payment because I did not have a written lease with
8 the landlord. I have learned the importance of
9 having a written lease the hard way. I spent months
10 looking for a new lease, but I was hesitant to sign
11 the lease because I alone could not fully understand
12 what the lease says.

13 My landlords always have attorneys, but I am a
14 small business owner with limited resources and I
15 cannot afford to an attorney. Brooklyn Legal Services
16 Corporation A and the Commercial Lease Assistance
17 Program have saved me. Without Commercial Lease
18 Assistance which provides free attorneys to small
19 businesses like myself, we would have no one else to
20 assist with lease reviews and lease negotiations
21 because legal fees are unaffordable.

22 Please support this critical program because that
23 is how you support small businesses like mine. The
24 issues my business faced include: My real estate
25 agent was unwilling to negotiate with the landlord on

1
2 my behalf; my landlord would agree to one thing, and
3 then end up drafting a clause in the lease that says
4 opposite; and I could not get my landlord to install
5 an AC and heating unit in the space prior to me
6 signing the lease.

7 An attorney at BKA reviewed my landlord's
8 proposed lease terms, and thoroughly explained my
9 rights and obligations under such lease term. They
10 advised me that in addition to my monthly rent, I am
11 obligated to pay additional money for real estate
12 taxes. They helped me to negotiate with the landlord
13 to reduce a portion of my monthly rent, so that I can
14 budget the real estate tax payments into my rental
15 costs and make sure I can afford the space.

16 They also coordinated with my real estate agent
17 and my landlord to push out the signing date, so that
18 the landlord will install the AC and heating unit in
19 the space ahead of time, and I can perform an
20 inspection before signing my name to the lease
21 agreement. Brooklyn A's Commercial Lease Assistance
22 Program helped my business. Thank you for hearing my
23 testimony today.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony.
25 I'm told that Melat Seyoum can do a translation for

the individual who testified a few people ago, Ruth Lopez Martinez. Melat, are you still available?

MELAT SEYOUM: Yes, yes, I'm available to do the translation.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, great. Thank you.

MELAT SEYOUM: Thank you. My name is Ruth Lopez Martinez and I am the worker, owner of the Cooperative Pa'lante Green Clean. We offer cleaning services to offices, apartments, houses and we do cleaning of post construction. We were created in 2014 as a solution to the lack of jobs in the city with limited wages that would allow us to survive in the city and to help our families in our countries.

Like my cooperative, there are a number of cooperatives in New York City with different economic activities for cleaning, support for the elderly, child care, dog care, and a lot of more services that help the economic growth of the city.

The Cooperatives have been able to improve the lives of many immigrants and improve unemployment rates in the city. However, the pandemic, as with a larger number of small business reaped havoc on most of the cooperatives. Some failed to survive and

close their doors. Others like mine, are suffering the economic consequences of the pandemic.

That is why today, I want to tell you that we need your support. We need you to put your eyes on the type of business that undoubtedly helps the prosperity of all. I believe that the future of the economy should be cooperative to achieve a better world with equity, justice and fair economic growth for the hardworking owners of cooperatives. And therefore, for the economic growth of the City of New York.

If cooperative grow, if we support us, we will have many more immigrants who can join these businesses. We will have a happier and more committed workforce giving New York City a leg up in economic growth. Your support, your commitment to cooperatives is necessary and urgent to continue to grow and not to be just another number in the statistics of small businesses that disappeared as a result of the pandemic due to lack of support. I am confident that we can count on you. Thank you distinguished honorable Chairperson and Council Members.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you both for your testimonies and for translating Melat. We will now be calling Andy Bowen followed by Shee Green and then Kate Krug. Andy.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ANDY BOWEN: Thank you Chair Menin, Council Members and staff who are putting this hearing together. My name is Andy Bowen and I am Principal of Bowen Public Affairs Consulting. I'm also a transgender woman and activist. I'm here to request the Committee on Small Business and Council support a proposed new initiative to help LGBTQ people into union careers, which we are calling the Pride at Work Initiative. We ask the Council fund this proposed initiative at a range of \$600,000 and \$700,000. This initiative is meant to bring funded organizations together and multisectoral approach with multiple pathways into union jobs focusing on recruitment of LGBTQ communities and NYC, primarily BIPOC LGBTQ communities.

Partners submitting testimony today will explain their projects in this effort but overall, we will have the combined effort of many entities to get LGBTQ people into union careers. Workforce

1
2 organizations who maintain strong union affiliations,
3 LGBTQ organizations, support from SEIU 1199
4 Employment and Training Fund and an ask from
5 Department of Citywide Administrative Services to
6 have an LGBTQ liaison do hiring halls for LGBTQ New
7 Yorkers and otherwise ensure civil services is an
8 affirming work environment. DC 37 supports that ask
9 too.

10 And why unions employment specifically? LGBTQ
11 people, especially BIPOC LGBTQ people are
12 disproportionately impacted by unemployment and
13 incomes below 200 percent of the poverty line. I
14 worked with the city over the last few years to
15 create a unity workforce program but much of the work
16 around LGBTQ workforce does not focus adequately on
17 adults. And given the poverty rates and unemployment
18 faced by LGBTQ adults, it's clear that we need high
19 road employment of the sort that we get from our
20 union siblings.

21 I'm happy to answer any further questions and ask
22 you Chair, and your Council colleagues to support the
23 Pride At Work Initiative with national funding in FY
24 2023 of \$600,000 to \$700,000. We will specify that,
25 I swear. Thank you for your time and consideration

and thank you again to everyone putting this together.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. We will now be calling on Shee Green followed by Kate Krug and then Ryan Cagle. Shee.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will move on with other witnesses and circle back to allow anyone we've missed to testify.

We will now be calling Kate Krug followed by Ryan Cagle and then Rebekah. Kate.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

KATE KRUG: Good afternoon and thank you Chair Menin, Speaker, Council Members and staff who put this hearing together. My name is Kate Krug and I'm the Executive Vice President of Nontraditional Employment for Women, also known as NEW. I'd like to begin by thanking you all for your continued and transformative support over the past several years.

Today, I'm here to represent NEW as a member of the Pride at Work Initiative. We seek the creation of a new administrative to support LGBTQ+ New Yorkers getting into union careers. We call this Pride at Work Initiative and we seek between \$600,00 and

1
2 \$700,000 for this work. As many of you know, new
3 enrolls, trains and places, low-income women,
4 transgender and nonbinary individuals into the
5 skilled construction trades. Programming that
6 transforms the lives of women across New York City.
7 These careers offer financial security with starting
8 wages of \$19 per hour, health benefits, access to a
9 401K, pension and annuity through unions.

10 Opening doors to stability and resources for
11 women and their families and providing a pathway to
12 the middle class. The Bureau of Labor Statistics
13 finds that unionized women make on average \$23
14 percent more than women without a union. As part of
15 the Pride at Work Initiative new leverage is
16 experienced in outreach, recruitment, enrollment and
17 engagement to work with LGBTQ+ individuals. NEW has
18 brought a deep experience in engaging individuals of
19 a range of challenges and committed to taking an
20 individualized approach to understanding their needs,
21 identifying needed resources, developing a plan for
22 success and empowering their decision making. As
23 part of this initiative, NEW will leverage a
24 relationship with our employer partners and our 44
25 years of vital work preparing low-income women for

high paying careers in the skill trades. Towards in accessing access to such careers among LGBTQ+ communities.

We ask that this be prioritized by the Committee of Small Business, the Speaker of Finance Chair and budget negotiating team. I just want to thank you today for your consideration and time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Kate. Next, we will be calling on Ryan Cagle to testify followed by Rebekah and then Nancie Katz. Ryan.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

RYAN CAGLE: Thank you so much. My name is Ryan Cagle and I am here representing the Business Outreach Center Network known as BOC Network or just BOC, and our Executive Director Nancy Carin. BOC Network together with its CDFI lending affiliate, BOC Capital Corp., pursue an economic justice mission. I'm here today to ask the Council to sustain its support for SBS and its long-standing community partners.

BOC Network, with offices and community partners in all five boroughs, helps deliver small businesses start, expand and gain market opportunities, and more recently to survive and recover. BOC Capital is well

known as a Contract Financing lender with NYC and recently stepped up as an SBA PPP lender. During the pandemic, BOC Network staff joined BOC Capital to provide over \$33 million in 1,452 SBA PPP loans. BOC Capital also launched an Entrepreneurs of Color COVID-19 Relief Fund to support underserved businesses.

BOC is a resource for small businesses at every stage of development, with a staff that includes speakers of over ten languages. BOC collaborates with NYC SBS in multiple roles including as an industrial business service provider serving Queens, Central and Brooklyn East Services areas which include six of the city's 21 industrial business zones. Our decades-long history of serving NYC-based immigrant and minority-owned businesses became a critical line of support during the COVID-19 pandemic. BOC joined forces with coalitions including the Bronx Business Organization Coalition, Industrial Jobs Coalition, Manufacturing and Innovation Council known as MaiiC, and others, including partners working to support employee-ownership, to expand our impact, network of resources, and knowledge sharing practices.

BOC's collaboration with SBS proved to be a critical component of this work and we ask the Council to sustain its support for SBS and its long-standing community partners. As we move towards economic recovery we must support the network of Industrial Business Service Providers –

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

RYAN CAGLE: And organizations like BOC, that can additionally leverage federal and state small business development and recovery funding. Together our support for immigrant, minority and women-owned businesses will preserve communities and change lives. Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ryan. Next, we'll be calling on Rebekah followed by Marsha Sue Trattner and then Nancie Katz. Rebekah.

REBEKAH LIVINGSTON: Hello.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

REBEKAH LIVINGSTON: My name is Rebekah Livingston, I'm the owner of Rebekah Rich Brow & Beauty, located in Midtown, Manhattan. I have been in business in New York City for six years prior to the pandemic, and then seven and a half total and I specialized in personal grooming and skincare

1
2 services for professional women. I initially started
3 the business in Portland, Oregon in 2003, but I
4 decided to take on my big city dreams and move to New
5 York.

6 I've always had a love for helping others and
7 once I found a skill that I also loved at 19-years-
8 old, I got the proper training, my entrepreneur
9 parents helped me start my business at 22, and I have
10 never looked back. So, 19-years-later, I still love
11 what I do and so the economic shutdown in March of
12 2020 was really difficult mentally as well as
13 financially. As a single income household, I paid my
14 rent for as long as I could, but eventually the money
15 ran out. I came to find help from non-profit Brooklyn
16 Legal Services Corporation A, from an email about the
17 Commercial Lease Assistance program and I was really
18 skeptical at first but I'm really glad that I
19 inquired with them.

20 I was assigned to Brooklyn A Attorney, Bill
21 Angelos, and he helped me tremendously. He
22 negotiated with my landlord and came up with a fair
23 deal for both them and myself and he used the grant
24 funds to negotiate my arrears and reduce my rent.
25 And that was a huge lifesaver for me as a small

1
2 business owner. He also helped to save on my monthly
3 lease and stagger the yearly increase so that I could
4 pay less longer with a termination option in case the
5 business climate doesn't improve. Without the
6 Commercial Lease Assistance program, I would have
7 been in debt to private attorneys and more in debt to
8 my landlords.

9 Bill also relayed how this type of negotiation
10 works, understanding my past and renegotiated
11 contract better and helping to improve the dynamic
12 between my landlord and myself, which is very really,
13 really important to me. CLA is really critical as a
14 small businesses and important to the vitality of New
15 York City and afar --

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 REBEKAH LIVINGSTON: Especially in an economic
18 downturn. So, please keep support keeping the
19 Brooklyn A and CLA to make this permanent because of
20 what this is doing to help small business owners get
21 back on to the feet, despite the enormous challenges
22 we are experiencing. Thank you for the opportunity
23 to be here and testify today.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Rebekah. Next, we
25 will be hearing from Marsha Sue Trattner, then we'd

1
2 like to call Nancie Katz followed by Chibueze Amakwe.
3 Marsha.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 MARSHA SUE TRATTNER: Yes, hello. Can you hear
6 me?

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can hear you.

8 MARSHA SUE TRATTNER: Oh, great thank you so
9 much. I am Marsha Trattner, I have a small business
10 in Red Hook Brooklyn called She-Weld and we do among
11 other things workshops. We have hundreds of people a
12 year taking workshops in metal working and welding
13 however, of course during the pandemic, we had a
14 shutdown and I had a landlord who although he said he
15 would work with me, would not and got more and more
16 aggressive about trying to get back rent for the time
17 I couldn't make money for the rent and it was only
18 because of Brooklyn A and the Lease Assistance
19 Program that I was able to basically stay in my
20 space. They were able to tell the landlord that they
21 had to stop harassing me. They were able to secure a
22 grant, the SRG grant so he had some money in his
23 pocket and able to negotiate \$10,000 off the back
24 rent as well as a payment plan and if it wasn't for
25 them, there's no way that I could have stayed in my

space as well as just negotiate it all with my landlord. So, please keep their funding and uhm, it's really, it's really important. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. We'd next like to call Nancie Katz to testify followed by Chibueze Amakwe and then Billy De La Rosa. Nancie.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

NANCIE KATZ: Hi, okay, I will be quick. My name is Nancie Katz, I am the Director of Seeds in the Middle. We're actually a not-for-profit working largely in Central Brooklyn, Crown Heights and Brownsville and Flatbush. I am calling on behalf of one of our proposals which is for uh, a group of Brownsville moms to be able to open a healthy café and market.

Despite many years of hearing about the support of small businesses in minority owned neighborhoods or what I mean minority owned businesses, we've been working 11 years in Brownsville and I've seen little investment in any sort of farm stands or sustainable businesses around food insecurity. It's very difficult to get a green card permit. There's no refrigeration hub that's been promised multiple

1 times. These people deserve the same right to fresh
2 fruits and vegetables as anyone else and they deserve
3 the right to create their own businesses to do that.
4

5 So, I am calling upon you to please consider;
6 it's outside the normal realm of what your proposals
7 are but it's called the Brownsville Mom's Healthy
8 Café and Farmstand and it will be run by local
9 Brownsville women from the Brownsville houses and
10 they would be creating probably the only access they
11 have to affordable fresh produce in that area.

12 I also ask you to review the Green Card
13 Initiative. I don't know why there's a waiting list
14 and why it's so hard to get green card permits in
15 these neighborhoods but it's really kind of criminal
16 and also we do cool run farm stands and we would
17 appreciate those are supported as well. Thank you
18 very much. Am I still talking or did somebody come
19 in?

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Nancie. We'll move
21 onto the next witness. Thank you so much.

22 NANCIE KATZ: And then the last thing, if I have
23 one second. We do something amazing called the Taste
24 of Brooklyn events, which are food and drink calls
25 that we feature restaurants and local neighborhoods

1
2 for people to come and try the food and drink for a
3 day and I just want to do a shout out for that. Our
4 first one is Taste of Bed Stuy on April 30th.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

6 NANCIE KATZ: It's a great way to support small
7 businesses. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Nancie. Thank you.
9 Next, we'd like to call Chibueze Amakwe followed by
10 Billy De La Rosa and then Mirjeley Cid. Chibueze.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 CHIBUEZE AMAKWE: Hi, good afternoon. I am here
13 to read the testimony of Chibueze Amakwe, business
14 owner of Sons of Daniel, a restaurant located in
15 Brooklyn that has been operating for 16 years.

16 Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A is perhaps
17 the reason why I am still in business today. With
18 their pro bono representation through the Commercial
19 Lease Assistance Program, I was able to alleviate the
20 stress my business was facing due to the COVID
21 pandemic closures. My personal negotiations with the
22 landlord were almost hitting a brick wall until I got
23 Brooklyn A Attorney Scott Bamberger involved. Scott
24 was able to assure my landlord that he was not
25 signing away his rights.

1
2 Prior to my contact with Brooklyn A, I had been
3 applying for any loans and/or grants designed to help
4 small businesses navigate the difficulties associated
5 with COVID 19 pandemic closures. I was not
6 successful in securing any grants and loans until
7 Brooklyn A. stepped in. In the last couple of months
8 I've been seeing all the empty restaurant spaces that
9 are now popping up as available for rent all around
10 the city. I know exactly why those spaces are empty
11 and I could have easily been one of them.

12 I want to extend my sincere appreciation to
13 Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A and Scott
14 Bamberger for helping me navigate through the
15 difficult, muddy waters of the challenges I face as a
16 small business owner and for advocating for me in my
17 negotiations with the landlord. My business is not
18 totally out of the woods but we're not staring from
19 hopelessness. We have secured a new lease and
20 reduced more than 60 percent of utilities that we
21 owed during the pandemic. Thanks to Brooklyn A and
22 Commercial Lease Assistance, there is a light at the
23 of the tunnel for us. This services should be
24 permanently available to all small business owners.
25 Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and if you could briefly give us your name as well for the record.

LARA VESSALI: Yes, Lara Vessali(SP?), I am the intake associate.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for your testimony.

LARA VESSALI: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we'd like to call Billy De La Rosa followed by Mirjeley Cid, and then Catherine Murcek. Billy.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

BILLY ANGELOS: Good afternoon Chair Menin and members of the Committee. My name is Bill Angelos and I am a Staff Attorney at Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation. I'm here to read the testimony of client Billy De La Rosa, business owner of BOD Fitness located in Manhattan.

Through my Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A attorney, I was able to put my trust in them to help guide me through lease negotiations and make sure our two locations did not shut down for good. Brooklyn A. and Commercial Lease Assistance is a lifesaver for small businesses like my own. Without Commercial Lease Assistance, which provides free attorneys to

small businesses like me, we would have no one else to assist because legal fees are unaffordable.

Before I came to Brooklyn A's Commercial Lease Assistance Program, I spent thousands in legal fees to try and get the landlord to come to the table but could not continue paying the private attorney's, it was too expensive. Please support this critical program because that is how you support small businesses like mine. The issues my business faced were: one, accumulation of too much back rent, over \$350,000 due to COVID-19 closures and restrictions. Brooklyn A was able to help get waived. Two, lack of money to pay for legal assistance. And lastly, lack of guidance on how to maneuver with renegotiating a lease with landlords. I am a business owner, not an attorney. Brooklyn A's Commercial Lease Assistance Program saved my business and this should be a permanent support for business owners. Thank you for hearing my testimony today.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we'd like to call Mirjeley Cid followed by Catherine Murcek and then Trina Dunston. Mirjeley.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

1
2 MIRJELEY CID: Good afternoon. I am here to read
3 the testimony of client, Mirjeley Cid, business owner
4 of MJ Design and Imprints, located in the Bronx. The
5 following is Ms. Cid's testimony.

6 We have been open for business since December
7 2020. We specialize in Custom Designs, Imprints,
8 Embroidery and Graphic Designs. I started this
9 business with the hope of becoming a successful Woman
10 Entrepreneur by not only empowering myself and others
11 but to also create employment opportunities to other
12 people within the community. As a creative
13 entrepreneur my work and services are centered in
14 helping other businesses, organizations and companies
15 to grow and provide them with materials and services
16 to boost their image and sales.

17 Unfortunately, I have a Landlord that has been
18 harassing me with rent payments right from when I
19 started operations in the first one month and
20 sometimes couple of days before the month even ends.
21 Him and his son would start harassing in front of my
22 customers in the middle of service without
23 considering the effects they were having on my
24 business. My Landlord's constant harassment and
25 disrespect ended up forcing me out of business for

1 months now. He locked me out of my store with all of
2 my business equipment and customers belongings in it.
3 He ended up moving all of my equipment out of the
4 store without my consent and is denying having them
5 in his possession.
6

7 Brooklyn A's Commercial Lease Assistance Program
8 has been working with me and is helping me with the
9 process of getting this situation resolved. Through
10 my Brooklyn A attorneys, Bill and Matt, I have been
11 in the process of getting the help I need. They have
12 been keeping constant communication with me and
13 walking me through this important process so that I
14 can finally resolve this issue with my Landlord. The
15 Commercial Lease Assistance Program is a lifesaver
16 for small businesses like my own and I am so thankful
17 for receiving this help from them.

18 Before coming to Brooklyn A's Commercial Lease
19 Assistance Program, I had contacted lots of lawyers
20 and feared having to pay lots of dollars in legal
21 fees. This is a program that should continue to get
22 support.

23 By supporting them you will be supporting small
24 businesses like mine in truly in need of these
25 services. Brooklyn A's Commercial Lease Assistance

1
2 Program has definitely helped me with important
3 information I didn't previously know about my process
4 and thank you for hearing my testimony today.
5 Mirjeley Cid.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and your name for
7 the record as well?

8 AASHNA SINGH: Aashna Singh, I'm the Program
9 Coordinator here at Brooklyn A.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Wonderful, thank you so much.
11 Next, we'll be calling on Catherine Murcek followed
12 by Trina Dunston. Catherine.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

14 CATHERINE MURCEK: Good afternoon and thank you
15 for the opportunity to testify. My name is Catherine
16 Murcek and I'm a worker/owner at Samamkaya Yoga Back
17 Care & Scoliosis Collective and a member of the New
18 York City Network of Worker Co-ops which is a partner
19 org in the Worker Coop Business Development
20 Initiative. You've already heard from some of my
21 friends about how your support of our community of
22 democratically run businesses helps to protect and
23 create jobs for women, immigrant workers and
24 communities of color across the five boroughs and in
25 a wide array of industries. I'm testifying today to

1
2 urge you to help NYC with a just recovery by
3 continuing to support the great work of WCBDI by
4 enhancing their funding to \$5.0 million and to please
5 also introduce and pass commercial rent stabilization
6 for small businesses across the city.

7 My Coop Samamkaya is a beautiful little studio in
8 Chelsea specializing in the therapeutic applications
9 of Yoga and with the mission of making yoga
10 accessible to all bodies. My 19 other worker owners
11 and I have been democratically running the studio
12 together in the same space for the last seven years
13 for which we had to borrow a lot of money to build
14 out for very specific needs with yoga, rope, balls
15 and all kinds of props and we're so grateful that we
16 were so grateful that we were able weather the storm
17 through the pandemic and held on to our physical
18 space due to a variety of factors.

19 Although we weren't eligible for financial relief
20 from the city, we did access PPP loans and were one
21 of the few lucky small businesses I know of who were
22 able to negotiate our rent. However, the fact that
23 we are co-op had a major impact on our resilience
24 through the crisis. When we had to shut our doors
25 almost exactly two years ago, we quickly banded

1
2 together, we pivoted, we decided together how to
3 adjust our pay and fee structures and we divided the
4 labor of researching, teaching platforms online and
5 support resources that might exist. We discussed
6 together how to keep the studio a float while still
7 allowing for those teachers who most needed the work
8 to teach online classes and make ends meet.

9 Furthermore, as members of the community, we had
10 access to certain small grants specific to worker co-
11 ops, one of these was Knick Knocks Cooperative
12 Sustainability Fund that awarded us enough funds to
13 pay for ten sessions with a consultant from another
14 co-op and these sessions have helped us enormously to
15 do a different communication and distribution of
16 labor challenges that we were facing through the
17 difficult transition –

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 CATHERINE MURCEK: To working mostly online. I'm
20 very happy to say, we were able to reopen our
21 physical space and have both in-person and virtual
22 classes online now and uhm, but also the majority of
23 co-ops in New York City have never been able to
24 access brick and mortar spaces because rents were so
25

high and this was an issue before the pandemic. And commercial rents can legally be raised any amount.

So, please consider that and please enhance WCBDI's funding. Thank you for hearing my testimony.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Catherine. Finally, we'd like to call Trina Dunston to testify. Trina.

TRINA DUNSTON: Good afternoon everybody. My name is Trina Dunston, I worked with Ms. Nancie Katz. I am a mother in Brownsville. I'm asking for the Council to please fund the health uhm, café that me and one of the mothers in Brownsville are trying to get. We are also trying to get a health and wellness store in place where we will have somebody who does health classes, mental health classes. Also, healthy products will be made. Soap, shea butter, body washes and stuff like that. In addition to that, we are trying to get up our café. Like I said, I'm a mother in Brownsville. I have been on the news. I have spoken with Lisa Evers about uhm trying to get healthy food. I also did a food walk with Ms. Nancie Katz citing that healthy food is a right to everybody and I'm just trying to get a healthy food market in the local Brownsville area. Because we have no

1
2 healthy markets out here whatsoever. We're
3 surrounded by fast food, other markets that they
4 don't sell. No healthy fruits and vegetables and I'm
5 trying to prevent children from having childhood
6 obesity as well as their parents. Thank you for
7 hearing my testimony.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Trina. I see
9 Council Member Mealy has her hand raised to ask a
10 question.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Hi, I'm just glad that she
12 said that she would want to do that. That is my
13 district. She could come to my district office 400
14 Rockaway and pick an avenue. Please, I would love to
15 support you and see that Brownsville be healthy all
16 the way through. So, I hope she can come to my
17 office and I can help her in that and see how the
18 city can maybe have a brick and mortar store with
19 fresh foods also, that she can sponsor. Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member.
21 That concludes our public testimony. As a reminder,
22 if you would like to submit written testimony for the
23 record, you may do so by emailing your testimony up
24 to 72 hours after the hearing to
25 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

1
2 If there are any witnesses who would like to
3 testify today who have not yet been called upon to
4 speak, please raise your hand now using the Zoom
5 raise hand function. I see Mirjeley Cid's hand is
6 raised. Do we have another testimony beyond the one
7 that was already delivered?

8 MIRJELEY CID: Yes, can I testify on behalf of
9 our director? I think they're trying to join but -

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sure, go ahead.

11 MIRJELEY CID: Alright, thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: A two minute timer, sure.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

14 MIRJELEY CID: Alright, I'm testifying on behalf
15 of the Director of the CED program here at Brooklyn A
16 Alham Usman. I am the Director of the Community
17 Economic Development program and I have the honor of
18 also heading the Commercial Lease Assistance program,
19 which is funded by NYSCSBS. Brooklyn A is a
20 nonprofit law firm and has served small business and
21 nonprofits for over 50 years. Today, you will have
22 heard and you already heard the testimony of small
23 business owners we've represented, our CLA attorneys,
24 and the members of the United for Small Business
25 Coalition, which Brooklyn A is a proud member of.

1
2 I wanted to draw your attention to some few
3 facts: First, the five-year CLA partnership between
4 SBS and Brooklyn A is a unique and innovative
5 approach to supporting small businesses. There is no
6 other program like it in the nation. It is also
7 important that SBS acknowledge Brooklyn Legal
8 Services Corporation A both in recognition of the
9 successful partnership and resolve the confusion that
10 small business owners face when seeking CLA services.

11 Because in the last six months alone, since July
12 2021 and Jan 2022 we have obtained over \$6.7 million
13 worth of relief. We have saved over \$2 million in
14 legal fees for small businesses. The 12-month budget
15 for CLA is \$5 million.

16 Second, CLA is literally the only meaningful
17 support for NYC small business owners who are
18 struggling. The commercial lease agreement is the
19 single most important contract of a brick-and-mortar
20 small business and it is also an agreement that has
21 been perfected for over 500 years in favor of
22 landlords. Without CLA small business owners do not
23 stand a chance.

24 Third, the fiscal year, we have represented New
25 York City small business owners in over 1000 cases.

1
2 These are small business owners from every single
3 borough; 214 cases in the Bronx, 313 cases in
4 Brooklyn, 380 cases in Manhattan, 220 cases in
5 Queens, and 58 cases in Staten Island.

6 We have business owners from other states outside
7 of the five boroughs reaching out to us and asking,
8 "Is this program available in my state?" And of
9 course, we have to tell them that it's not. You and
10 I have to make sure it remains, that New York City's
11 small businesses, and it evolves to the needs of our
12 for and non-for-profit small businesses including
13 litigation support.

14 Thank you for your continued support of Brooklyn
15 A and the Commercial Lease Assistance Program.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired. Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Seeing no further
18 hands raised, I will now turn it to Chair Menin to
19 close out the hearing. Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you so much. What an
21 incredible turnout today. I really want to thank
22 every member of the public for your wonderful and
23 compelling testimony. It's so helpful to us in the
24 Council to hear from all of you. To hear about the
25 experiences that you all as small businesses or as

1 attorney's who are representing small businesses or
2 advocates representing small businesses are making
3 and we take all of this testimony very seriously and
4 take it into account as we are advocating for
5 increased funding for SBS and increased services.
6

7 So, with that, I want to thank all of you for
8 being here and for joining us today and I'm going to
9 close the hearing. [GAVEL]. Thank you.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date April 29, 2022