

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES
Of the
COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

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September 23, 2020
Start: 11:14 a.m.
Recess: 11:21 a.m.

HELD AT: Remote Hearing

B E F O R E: Mark Gjonaj
CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Helen Rosenthal
Bill Perkins
Ydanis Rodriguez
Stephen T. Levin

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Cloud recording started.

3 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Okay. Good morning and
4 welcome to the remote city Council hearing on small
5 business. We ask that COUNCIL members please turn on
6 their video for verification purposes. Please place
7 all cell phones to vibrate or silent. Chair Gjonaj,
8 where ready to begin.

9 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Good morning. I
10 am Council member Mark Gjonaj, chair of the Committee
11 on Small Business and I would like to welcome you to
12 our remote vote today on proposed Introduction 2083-
13 A. The COVID-19 crisis presents the greatest threat
14 to small business economy in modern history.
15 According to a recent report by the city comptroller,
16 small business revenues should drop 25 percent since
17 January ranking New York City 40th amongst the 52
18 largest American cities during this period. In early
19 April, small businesses had experienced a drop in
20 revenue of over 60 percent. As small businesses are
21 experiencing massive declines in revenue, thousands
22 of small businesses have closed in New York.
23 According to the city comptroller report, at least
24 2800 small businesses closed permanently between
25 March 1st and July 10th. Partnership that New York

2 City predicts that as many as 1/3 of the 230,000
3 small businesses in New York City may never reopen,
4 forever changing the commercial corridors that make
5 up our neighborhoods. As small businesses are
6 experiencing declines in revenue, many small
7 businesses have been unable to pay rent. The
8 hospitality Alliance surveyed restaurants, bars,
9 nightclubs, and 11 venues in late August and in early
10 September and found that 87 percent of respondents
11 did not pay their full August rent. I want to
12 emphasize that many landlords in this city are
13 hopefully renegotiating their leases with their
14 tenants in good faith. Some small business owners
15 may fear, however, that their inability to pay rent
16 may lead to their landlords to go after their assets
17 or personal property. This past spring, the Council
18 boldly acted to prevent this through the passage of
19 local law 55 which temporarily prohibited the
20 enforcement of personal liability provisions in some
21 commercial leases. The proposed introduction we'll
22 be voting on today will extend this necessary bill
23 until March 31st, 2020. Proposed Introduction 2083
24 will also mandate Department of Small Business
25 Services or another agency designated by the Mayor to

2 conduct an information and outreach campaign to
3 educate commercial tenants affected by this law about
4 its protections which I hope will also take into
5 considerations the language barrier and various
6 businesses throughout the city. The mass closure of
7 the city's small business will leave commercial
8 corridors decimated and unemployment rates high. As
9 the Chair of the Committee on Small Business, it is
10 my priority to ensure our small business sector will
11 reemerge strong after the COVID-19 crisis is over.
12 This is about survival so that they can thrive later.
13 I am proud of the work of this committee and fighting
14 to protect the support and the city's mom-and-pop
15 shop and micro businesses. With that said, I would
16 like to thank my Chief of Staff, Reggie Johnson, our
17 senior legislative counsel, Christopher Sartori, our
18 policy analyst, Noah Bixler, and financial analyst,
19 Elvia Ali for their hard work in preparing for this
20 hearing. I want to recognize that we have been
21 joined by Council members Perkins, Council member
22 Rosenthal, and Council member Levin. And I hope I
23 didn't miss anyone. I want to turn it over to
24 William Martin for roll call and vote.

1 COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS 6

2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Good morning. William
3 Martin, committee clerk. Roll call vote Committee on
4 Small-cap business. Introduction 2083-A. Chair
5 Gjonaj?

6 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: I vote aye.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK: Levin?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I vote aye.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you. Rosenthal?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I vote aye.

11 Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you. Perkins?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER PERKINS: I vote aye. I

14 vote aye.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you. Yes. By a
16 vote of four in the affirmative, zero in the
17 negative, and no abstentions, the item has been
18 adopted by the Committee.

19 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: All right. Thank
20 you all. This will end our hearing.

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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 October 13, 2020