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July 14, 2020

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Commissioner Jonnel Doris
NYC Department of Small
Business Services
1 Liberty Plaza, New York, NY
10006

Commissioner Oxiris Barbot
NYC Department of Health and
Mental Hygiene
42-09 28th St., Long Island City
NY, 11101

Dear Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Barbot and Commissioner Doris,

As you are well aware, our small businesses are in crisis. It has been estimated that up to 40% of New York City's small businesses will not survive the COVID-19 pandemic. Small, local businesses are so much of what make New York City a great place to live, and a loss of this magnitude would be a terrible blow to our city's economy and culture.

To address these concerns I have started a Small Business Recovery Advisory Group in southern Brooklyn with dozens of local small business owners. Many of the participants suggested that it would be helpful for the city to provide access to health experts to ensure compliance with guidelines and the safety standards of themselves and their customers.

I have noted that SBS offers virtual compliance consultations for the Open Restaurants Program based on a checklist model. While this is helpful, I am specifically requesting that the city offer health experts to provide individualized assistance to all businesses, as every small business is unique. This program should be a collaboration between SBS and DOHMH. These consultations could be done virtually, but if transmission rates remain low, masked, in-person visits from health experts would be extremely helpful as these small business owners determine how to re-open safely.

I hope you will take the suggestion of the small businesses on the ground, experiencing these issues firsthand seriously, and consider creating a collaborative inter-agency pilot program to provide small business owners with personalized assistance from health experts.

Sincerely,

Andrew S. Gounardes
Member of Senate