

*THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK*

**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

**MARCH 23, 2020**

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***CM CHIN CALLS FOR RELIEF FOR NYC STREET VENDORS***

***Facing sales losses of up to 80%, street vendors are not eligible for existing Small Business Services relief packages but continue to face punitive fines***

**NEW YORK** - Today, in a letter led by Council Member Chin, New York City Council Members called on the City to provide economic relief to street vendors who have been suffering in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Street vendors, depending on foot traffic for their businesses, have been hit particularly hard in recent weeks. Many have reported sales losses upwards of 80%, and as sole proprietors, currently do not fit the criteria in the two recently COVID-19 related relief programs offered by the Department of Small Business Services: the retention grant and zero interest loan.

As prime sponsor of Intro 1116, street vendor reform legislation that would raise the longstanding cap on licenses for street vendors, Council Member Chin is urging the City to also direct attention to street vendors, many of whom are forced to spend tens of thousands of dollars to rent a permit in an exploitative underground market for an opportunity to work.

"Street vendors are our neighborhood fruit and produce carts, halal stands, and breakfast trucks. Everyday, they withstand the rain, snow, and sweltering heat to feed our communities. While I'm thankful that the City's new emergency grant program will provide some relief to small businesses, it's disappointing that once again, street vendors are left on their own," said **Council Member Margaret S. Chin**. "We know that the catastrophic economic fallout of this crisis is felt by everyone, but the continued multi-agency enforcement against street vendors compounds on the stresses and record losses confronting them. I urge the City to re-evaluate its priorities: instead of spending time on squeezing money out of this vulnerable immigrant workforce, we

must create a comprehensive relief package that is inclusive of all types of businesses and workers. And that includes street vendors."

According to the Street Vendors Project, fines against street vendors are continuing in spite of the increasingly desperate circumstances street vendors are working under. In the letter, Council Member Chin joins NYC Council colleagues to ask for grant opportunities that street vendors are eligible to receive, emergency relief funds, as well as a suspension on enforcement of compliance violations that do not impact public health and safety.

The full letter is attached.

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THE COUNCIL OF  
 THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
**MARGARET S. CHIN**  
 COUNCIL MEMBER, 1<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT, MANHATTAN

**CHAIR**  
 AGING

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**COMMITTEES**  
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 STANDARDS AND ETHICS  
 YOUTH SERVICES  
 SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT  
 IMMIGRATION

March 23, 2020

Mayor Bill de Blasio  
 City Hall  
 New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio,

In the midst of the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic, we must think about how best to support the most vulnerable communities in New York City. For the street vendors and immigrant workers who New Yorkers rely on every day, the COVID-19 epidemic is a dire situation, leaving many with fear and confusion as to how they will sustain themselves and their families not just in the coming weeks, but tomorrow.

Street vendors across the five boroughs are reporting loss in sales of up to 80%. Street vendors are primarily low-wage immigrant workers who rely on busy streets in order to survive day to day. As sole proprietors, street vendors are ineligible for benefits or support like paid sick leave and unemployment insurance, and the documentation requirements of the current grant and loan opportunities offered by NYC Small Business Services are next to impossible for them to meet. Without adequate relief efforts, New York City's street vendors are forced to continue to work, risking their health and well-being in the process.

We join advocates at the Street Vendor Project in asking you for emergency relief for street vendors as frontline food workers whose needs are falling between the cracks of current city policy. Please consider implementing the following measures:

- Create granting opportunities via NYC Small Business Services for sole proprietors, that microbusinesses including street vendors are eligible to receive
- Ensure workers who are employed by food cart or truck owners, regardless of immigration status, are eligible for any forthcoming emergency relief funds for workers
- Immediate suspension of all NYPD, DCWP, DOH and Parks Department enforcement of street vendor compliance violations that do not significantly impact public health and safety, regardless of whether the vendor has a permit or a license
- Waive outstanding tickets issued since January 2020, as vendors will be unable to work for the foreseeable future
- Ensure street vendors are included in NYC Department of Education childcare plan for frontline workers

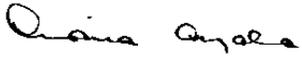
We are depending on you to ensure all New Yorkers, especially the most vulnerable street vendor workers and microbusiness owners, are able to make it through this crisis, and thrive in the years to come.

Thank you for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,

Margaret S. Chin  
 Council Member, District 1

Carlos Menchaca  
 Council Member, District 38



Diana Ayala  
Council Member, District 8



Debi Rose  
Council Member, District 49



Stephen Levin  
Council Member, District 33



Antonio Reynoso  
Council Member, District 34



Carlina Rivera  
Council Member, District 2



Brad Lander  
Council Member, District 39