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Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce Launches COVID-19 Small Business Task Force;
Asks City and State to Adopt Immediate Measures to Support Small Businesses

The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce is convening a task force of ten small businesses that represent different sectors of the borough's economy to understand how COVID-19 is affecting them and to determine what support and information they need to navigate the unique challenges related to the outbreak. The impacts of the virus will be different for small businesses than for large companies, and Brooklyn Chamber officials realize reliable, real-time information is needed in the face of rapidly changing conditions on the ground and in communities. The Brooklyn Chamber will document their experiences by facilitating a twice-weekly call with the task force members, asking the same six questions related to business conditions and challenges they are facing. The information collected will be used to inform legislators and policy makers about how small businesses are being impacted.

"This is an unprecedented crisis and we don't know when the situation will turn around," said Brooklyn Chamber President and CEO, Randy Peers. "What we do know is that the impact on small businesses as opposed to large companies will be disproportionate. Neighborhood retailers, restaurants and construction firms, for example, can't just shut their doors and work from home."

The ten business sectors that comprise the task force include: Retail, Restaurants, Hotels, Bars, Manufacturing, Construction, Real Estate, Tech, Cultural Institutions and the Non-Profit Sector. Recurring questions that will be posed to the group include:

- What steps have you taken to protect your business/employees/customers in light of COVID-19?
- How has your revenue been impacted in the last few days?
- How has your workforce been impacted?
- What support does your business need to continue operating?
- What has been the most significant challenge for your business in the last few days?
- What information do you need to continue to better inform your business operations?

The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce also acknowledged the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) for its quick implementation of a no-interest loan program targeting small businesses experiencing hardship announced earlier this week. The Brooklyn Chamber will be working with SBS to promote this loan program in all neighborhoods throughout the borough.

The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce is also calling on the City and State legislatures to take some immediate steps to mitigate what will surely be the most significant economic crisis to face small businesses in decades. Specifically, the Brooklyn Chamber is calling for:

- A reduction in sales tax for a period of six months to encourage local commerce

- Postponement of the plastic bag ban to maximize convenience and flexibility for consumers and retailers
- Temporarily suspending mandatory scheduling mandates on retailers and restaurants enacted under the City's Fair Workweek Law
- Re-evaluating policy proposals regarding commercial vacancies and commercial rent control as they represent punitive measures against landlords
- Eliminating penalties for late payment of business and property taxes
- Extending the cure period for various violations facing businesses during the crisis

In addition, the Brooklyn Chamber strongly believes the City should indefinitely reconsider Int.800-A, the Paid Vacation Bill that would add another significant cost mandate on small employers.

"Enacting the measures that we have outlined will demonstrate an unprecedented commitment to saving our neighborhood enterprises and may be the only thing that will prevent a major collapse of New York City's small business ecosystem during this momentous crisis" said Peers.

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