



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**CITY ANNOUNCES FREE LEGAL SERVICES TO HELP SMALL BUSINESSES WITH  
LEASE ISSUES**

*Commercial Lease Assistance Program Will Help Tenants with Lease Negotiation, Landlord  
Issues, Lease Renewal, and Eviction Notices*

**NEW YORK**— Today, the de Blasio administration announced the launch of a new program to help small business owners with issues related to a business lease. The Commercial Lease Assistance Program, offered by the NYC Department of Small Business Services, will allow small business owners to obtain free legal assistance on topics that include negotiating a lease, resolving landlord issues, responding to an eviction notice, breach of contract disputes, and lease renewal. Non-franchise businesses that meet income requirements are eligible for this service.

“Small businesses are the economic heart and soul of this city and they deserve every opportunity to succeed,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “The Commercial Lease Assistance Program will give small business owners the help they need to resolve legal issues without driving them out of business.”

“Small businesses are the lifeline of our neighborhoods and a significant part of what makes our city so special – and in the era of big business, it has never been more important to this Council help ensure that small business owners can thrive,” said **New York Council Speaker Corey Johnson**. “Free legal assistance regarding lease or landlord issues can go a long way for small business owners, saving money and passing on savings to local residents. With Council Member Mark Gjonaj as Chair of the Small Business Committee, he will be a strong voice who will continue advocating for small businesses owners in New York City.”

This new program offers pre-litigation services to help small business owners resolve problems before they end up in court. This can include sending legal correspondence to a landlord, addressing issues related to tenant harassment, and resolving challenges when a building changes ownership. The program will not represent clients in matters that end up in court.

The Commercial Lease Assistance Program will receive \$2.4 million in funding over two years and will provide an average of 40 hours of legal services per client and a dedicated attorney to work with each business owner. This program will help small business owners achieve

successful outcomes while avoiding thousands of dollars in attorney fees. These services are being offered in partnership with Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, Volunteers of Legal Services, and the Urban Justice Center.

“Small businesses don’t have legal teams like the big guys do, but we are making it clear that the City stands in their corner,” said **Gregg Bishop, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services**. “Even basic legal help can be costly and out of reach for small business owners, but this free service will go a long way towards helping small business owners solve problems related to their lease.”

“New York City’s small businesses provide vital services and often serve as economic engines to their communities,” said **NYC Councilmember Mark Gjonaj, Small Business Committee Chair**. “This program will go a long way towards helping struggling small business owners manage the complicated and often expensive burden of dealing with commercial lease issues.”

Small business owners in need who cannot otherwise afford an attorney are eligible for this program. Examples of businesses that may be eligible:

- Are immigrant-, minority-, women-, or veteran-owned,
- Employ local low-income residents,
- Are located in a rezoned or high-poverty areas; Or
- Offer job training opportunities

Services are now available. Businesses should visit [nyc.gov/commlease](http://nyc.gov/commlease) or call 311 to determine their eligibility and learn more. Services are available in ten languages, including: Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Bengali, Haitian Creole, Korean, Arabic, Urdu, French, and Polish.

Businesses can also access SBS’ [Comprehensive Guide to Commercial Leasing](#).

“Small businesses across this city are feeling the squeeze of rising costs. Too often, landlords take advantage of the strain our mom-and-pops are under in order to push them out of their commercial space in search of tenants who would pay more,” said **NYC Councilmember Robert E. Cornegy**. “In 2016, the Council passed and the Mayor signed my bill, Intro. 851, which created a cause of action for commercial tenants being harassed in this way. It is great to see the City backing this important legislation aimed at helping small business owners stay put by offering the kind of legal assistance many need but cannot afford.”

“Small businesses are big contributors to our city, which is why it’s crucial that we provide support services to help them compete and thrive,” said **Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President**. “Legal assistance, especially lease assistance, will be a big help for storefronters and small business owners.”

“Small businesses are the economic engines of Brooklyn’s commercial corridors. I commend SBS Commissioner Bishop for providing our local entrepreneurs with much-needed free legal services,” said **Eric Adams, Brooklyn Borough President**. “For many small businesses, particularly in underserved communities, basic legal matters can be a hurdle too high to

overcome, as establishments do not have adequate financial resources to hire representation in a court of law. This program helps ensure there is a more equal playing field for all small businesses working to address lease issues.”

“Any time we are helping our immigrant, minority, women or veteran-owned businesses is a win for Brooklyn and its economic development,” said **Andrew Hoan, Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce President and CEO**. “Kudos to Commissioner Gregg Bishop for recognizing the need for small business owners to obtain free legal assistance that they would otherwise not be able to afford.”

“As President and CEO of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce, I am excited to hear that SBS will be providing free legal services to small businesses in The Bronx and throughout the five boroughs of New York City,” said **Nunzio Del Greco, President and CEO of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce**. “The free legal services for small businesses are essential in leveling the playing field with issues involving landlords, contracts and a myriad of other legal issues that arise”.

"This program will be a game changer for entrepreneurs who often lack access to affordable legal help," said **Jessica Walker, President and CEO of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce**. "We applaud the Administration for taking this bold step which will help many businesses survive and thrive in New York."

“It is important for business owners to understand every aspect of their leases,” said **Linda Baran, President of the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce**. “Providing access to legal advisement will help business owners make better decisions when negotiating their leases, and avoid running into costly pitfalls. I commend Commissioner Bishop and the NYC Department of Small Business Services for bringing this new free program to our city’s small “mom & pop” businesses.”

“This program is a real shot in the arm for NYC small businesses; especially in Queens County,” said **Thomas J. Grech, President and CEO of the Queens Chamber of Commerce**. “Mom and Pops and other small to medium size businesses now have a another resource to be able to compete and flourish. We commend SBS Commissioner Gregg Bishop and his team for advancing this o the agenda”

“The Commercial Lease Assistance Program is the inaugural initiative of our new Small Business Support Project which brings our 45+ years of experience and commitment to representing non-profit community based organizations in transactional matters to the small business community of New York City,” said **Jessica Rose, Director of the Community Economic Development Program for Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A**. “We are excited to partner with SBS and our collaborating legal service providers and community based organizations in this ambitious and impactful program. Together, we hope to usher in a new day where the playing field for small businesses in commercial lease related matters is more level.”

**About NYC Small Business Services (SBS)**

SBS helps unlock economic potential and create economic security for all New Yorkers by connecting New Yorkers to good jobs, creating stronger businesses, and building vibrant neighborhoods across the five boroughs. For more information on all SBS services, go to [nyc.gov/sbs](https://nyc.gov/sbs), call 311, and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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