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DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS LAUNCHES #NICKELED&DIMED ON TWITTER AND FACEBOOK, DEPUTIZING NEW YORKERS TO ACT AS "SECRET SHOPPERS" FOR SUPERMARKET OVERCHARGES

Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Jonathan Mintz today announced [#nickeled&dimed](#), a new outreach initiative to educate New Yorkers about their rights at the supermarket and deputize them to act as "secret shoppers" and report if they experience overcharges at the supermarket. New Yorkers can tweet their stories to [@NYCDCA](#) using the hashtag [#nickeled&dimed](#) and post to DCA's [Facebook](#) page. This outreach initiative is part of the Department's two-year intensive crackdown on extensive illegal pricing practices at City supermarkets.

Last August, DCA announced that its yearlong inspection of supermarkets throughout the five boroughs resulted in a compliance rate of only 48 percent. Commissioner Mintz then vowed to double the number of supermarket inspections in the next fiscal year, the results of which will be announced this August. Midway through this year of doubled inspections, in January, DCA announced that after already conducting nearly 500 inspections, compliance had plummeted even lower to only 33 percent. Inspectors check accurate pricing, proper taxing of products, and accuracy of scales and scanners, all of which harm New Yorkers' wallets at the checkout counter. When DCA announces this year's results of its yearlong intensified crackdown next month, it will also relay stories that New Yorkers have shared through [#nickeled&dimed](#).

"New York consumers will make great 'secret shoppers' to tip us off to their own firsthand accounts about what's happening at supermarket checkout counters," said Commissioner Jonathan Mintz. "Please tweet us, post to our Facebook wall, and tell us if you're being [#nickeled&dimed](#) at your local supermarket. We'll also be sharing important consumer tips with our followers and fans."

The messages received as part of [#nickeled&dimed](#) will be treated as enforcement tips, so they should include the name of the supermarket, address or cross streets, and an explanation of the overcharges. Deputized consumers should also be on the look-out for a lack of prices on individual items, items incorrectly rung up at the register, advertised prices that don't scan correctly at the register, a store's failure to post the unit price on the shelf, and a failure to provide scales for weighing items sold by weight. For a complete guide to smart shopping, download DCA's guide [Saving at the Supermarket](#). To file an official overcharge complaint, call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/consumers](#).

DCA enforces the Consumer Protection Law and other related business laws throughout New York City. Empowering consumers and businesses to ensure a fair and vibrant marketplace, DCA licenses more than 78,000 businesses in 55 different industries. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses alike about their rights and responsibilities. DCA's Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) is the first local government initiative in the nation with a mission to educate, empower, and protect New Yorkers with low incomes so they can build assets and make the most of their financial resources. Toward that end, OFE seeks to increase access to high-quality, low-cost financial education and counseling; improve access to income-boosting tax credits; connect households to safe and affordable banking and asset-building products and services; and enforce and improve consumer protections to enhance financial stability. For more information, call 311 or visit DCA online at [nyc.gov/consumers](#). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and find us on [Facebook](#).

Know your rights at the register:

- **Scanners** - Scanners provide a detailed receipt for the items you buy. Check the receipt against your purchases.
- **Advertised Items** - Ads must truthfully describe the name, variety and size of the item on sale and list any purchase restrictions. Stores must make reasonable quantities available.
- **Scales** - Markets must have a scale within 30 feet of their prepackaged food sections. Check for short weight and the tare weight deduction — the deduction taken for the weight of the empty container from the gross weight. The scale must have a DCA seal on it, start at zero, and come to rest before weight or price is quoted.
- **Unit Pricing** - The unit price — the cost per measure (pound, pint, etc.) — must be listed on the shelf below most products.
- **Item Pricing** - All market commodities sold or offered for sale in New York City must have a stamp, tag or label giving the item's cost, except:
 - baby food in jars
 - tobacco
 - bulk-food sales
 - vending machine products
 - display items at the end of the aisle
 - eggs
 - food sold for on-premise consumption
 - fresh produce
 - items on sale for seven days or less
 - milk
 - snack foods
 - frozen foods with packages that don't allow stickers
- **"Open" or "Freshness" Dates** - These dates show the last recommended sale or use date, and must be marked on perishable food product packages, such as egg cartons, dairy products and baked goods.
- **Packaged Products** - The product's identity, net weight, measure or numerical count, and the name and address of the distributor must appear on its label.