



**TESTIMONY:
Limiting and Prohibiting
Certain Signage**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS
MELANIE E. LA ROCCA, COMMISSIONER
SEPTEMBER 23, 2019**

Good morning Chair Cornegy and members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings. I am Melanie E. La Rocca, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Buildings (“the Department”). I am joined today by Gus Sirakis, my First Deputy Commissioner. Together, we are pleased to be here to offer testimony on two of the bills before the Committee today regarding signage.

Signs, including accessory signs and advertising signs, must comply with requirements in both the New York City Building Code (“Building Code”) and the New York City Zoning Resolution (“Zoning Resolution”). The regulations in the Building Code address permitting and structural issues and the regulations in the Zoning Resolution address issues including permissible surface area, projection and height. Collectively, these regulations exist to protect the public from dangerous or illegally installed signs and to reduce visual clutter. As such, the Department takes seriously its obligation to enforce these laws.

That being said, Local Law 28 of 2019 (“Local Law 28”) instituted a moratorium, which will run until February 2021, on the issuance of violations for accessory signs, which are also referred to as business signs. The Department recognizes that educating the business community regarding applicable laws and regulations is critical and is conducting outreach to small business owners so that they know exactly what they need to do to bring their signs into compliance. This outreach includes direct mailings to businesses who have received violations from the Department for illegally installed signs and direct outreach to these businesses by our Community Engagement staff. We also encourage small businesses to visit our Borough Offices on Tuesday nights during our open house, where they can receive one-on-one advice from Department experts on signage issues or on any construction projects they are planning. We

thank this Committee for its partnership on behalf of the small business community and look forward to updating this Committee further on the implementation of this law.

The first bill before the Committee, **Intro. 790**, would prohibit the placement of more than one ground or wall sign advertising the availability of retail or commercial space for rent on each side of a vacant commercial or mixed-use building. We would like to discuss this bill further with this Committee and with its sponsor to better understand the issue it is seeking to solve and to craft a careful solution to such issue. Our concern is that this bill could have the unintended consequence of resulting in additional enforcement actions being taken by the Department against businesses and residential buildings seeking to rent their vacant space and reactivating that segment of the streetscape. Additionally, we are concerned about making it more difficult to operate a business in New York City by adding another layer of regulation. Finally, this Committee should be aware that depending on the content of these signs, the Department may be unable to take any enforcement action until the Local Law 28 moratorium on the issuance of violations that I previously mentioned has concluded.

The next bill before the Committee, **Intro. 1545**, would prohibit alcohol advertisements on an outdoor sign within 500 feet in any direction of a school. Research suggests that greater exposure to alcohol advertisements can increase the likelihood of underage alcohol consumption and encourage heavier alcohol consumption. For these reasons, this Administration banned alcohol advertising on City property earlier this year. We are supportive of this bill as it reaffirms this Administration's position on alcohol advertising.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

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