



## Commissioner Maria Torres-Springer on the Importance of Small Businesses in New York



*Maria Torres-Springer, commissioner of the city's Department of Small Business Services, outlines new plans to support immigrant-owned businesses and recruit more tech workers in an interview with MetroFocus host Rafael Pi Roman.*

As commissioner of the Department of Small Business Services, Maria Torres-Springer is responsible for working with more than 200,000 small businesses in New York City. Nearly 95 percent of the city's businesses are considered "small businesses," or businesses with fewer than 100 employees, and they employ more than half of the city's private sector workforce.

"Small businesses are the lifeblood of the economy and drivers of neighborhood economy," Torres-Springer said. "Neighborhood businesses are the businesses that employ local people, they deliver important goods and services but in many ways they're also so much more than that. They are a great equalizer, in my opinion, and a path to the middle-class for so many New Yorkers."

The department recently announced the Immigrant Business Initiative, which will work with community-based organizations across the city to deliver free services to immigrant entrepreneurs in five languages – Chinese, Korean, Haitian-Creole, Russian and Spanish.

"Given that immigrant entrepreneurs make up about 40 percent of the small businesses in New York City, there's a real opportunity there to continue to promote and support them," Torres-Springer told Pi Roman. "There is more that we can do to ensure that immigrant entrepreneurs continue to contribute to the economy."

Small businesses suffered huge losses from Superstorm Sandy in 2012. More than 23,000 small businesses were affected.

"It is a critical priority of mine and the mayor's to ensure that we are redoubling our efforts to assist businesses who are still recovering from the effects of Hurricane Sandy. In the aftermath of the storm, the city deployed almost \$30 million in grants and loans," Commissioner Torres-Springer said. "We want to make sure we're providing the type of guidance that they need to restart their business and continue to thrive."

Watch full video [here](#).