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Remarks as Prepared: DCWP Commissioner Levine Delivers Remarks at DCWP's 57th Anniversary Event

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DCWP! Good afternoon and welcome to the 57th birthday party for the best government agency in all the land.

It is a real joy to be able to look out and see every team, every division, gathered together as one. I've been on the job since January, but I feel so lucky to be here and serve alongside each and every one of you. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for welcoming me in and treating me as one of your own since day one.

Today isn't just about marking our agency's rich history. It's about honoring YOU: recognizing your labor; celebrating the quiet, often unacknowledged work you do, day in and day out, to strengthen the fabric of our city.

I've spent my entire career in government — in state offices, at the federal level — and I can say without hesitation: this is one of the most dedicated and special groups of civil servants I've ever had the privilege to work with.

You are here because you believe in local government. You believe in a fair social contract, a fair marketplace, and a fair shot for ordinary people in this dense, complex metropolis we call home. You believe, fundamentally, in the promise of New York City — a city where any person of any creed and any background can build a life, a career, and a family.

And right now, we're in a significant moment in our department's history. We have found ourselves at the very heart of Mayor Mamdani's affordability agenda, our work proving indispensable to building a city that working people can afford.

Since the beginning of this new administration, we have made good on that vision: returning \$9.3 million to New Yorkers, processing over 100,000 tax returns, cracking down on junk fees and predatory app companies, supporting our small businesses and introducing nation-leading rules that protect workers and consumers.



These early results, of course, did not happen randomly nor independently. So, I want to take some space to acknowledge the work that makes it happen.

Let's start with the genuine, consistent engagement with New Yorkers that DCWP provides on the ground, every day. Our ever-present External Affairs team, with its consistent engagement with New Yorkers, crisscrossing the city to take our profile to new heights, by participating in more than 470 community events, and even launching our very own TikTok account.

Our extraordinary Licensing team has processed 6,260 applications and provided in-person assistance to 3,221 individuals — with speedy 4-minute processing times that we can all take pride in.

Meanwhile, our intrepid Office of Financial Empowerment has reduced New Yorkers' debt by \$144 million dollars. And, this past season is already on its way to serving over 105,000 New Yorkers.

All of this, of course, takes robust support from DOTSS — the division instrumental in data reporting and project management, integrating over 30 reports with cutting-edge analyses and resolving 1,228 IT requests in the new year. Also, thanks to our award-winning Administration Division, who have established our agency as the city leader in equitable procurement.

I want to acknowledge the thorough inspections completed by our indefatigable Enforcement team, who have routed nearly 4,000 supermarkets, groceries, and megastores for inspection in the first 100 days of the administration.

Next, the efforts of our talented investigators, data scientists, and attorneys in our Office of Labor Policy and Standards, who settled over 100 cases last year, recovering over \$44 million for over 24,000 working New Yorkers, as well as our trailblazing General Counsel Division, who have brought landmark cases, like Radiant Solar, Extra Space, and Instant Recovery, and raised consumer standards across the five boroughs.

We may be one of the smaller agencies in New York City, but we sure are the mightiest. It's in our DNA. It's at the core of our history, a history with a common dominator across the decades: elevating the needs of the people who make this city run.

We all know the stakes of our work. It's why we're here in this room.

For many New Yorkers, making ends meet is getting harder. One in four lives in poverty, while prices climb and hidden charges quietly pile up at checkout. Working families and small business owners are being forced out of the neighborhoods they built and have anchored for generations.



But we must not forget that New York City has faced similar pressures before. In 1969, as household costs surged and frustration grew, city leaders established an agency with the authority to rein in unfair business practices — built on the simple notion that public action can create a more balanced and transparent marketplace for the people of this city.

That agency? The Department of Consumer Affairs, our predecessor.

Today, let us recall our origins and vow to renew our founding principles. Let us remember that our work is part of something far larger: the steady construction of making democracy materially real, not just formally equal on paper. Because democracy is not only measured at the ballot box; it lives and falters on whether people believe the system actually works for them.

You provide tangible proof, every day, that government can stand on the side of and work for ordinary people. Your work is part of what keeps democracy alive, grounded in the daily lives of the people it is meant to serve. That impact cannot be overstated.

It is the honor of the lifetime to be in that fight with you.

So, here's to you. Here's to 57. It sure does look good on us, DCWP.

Now, let's celebrate!