



Samuel A.A. Levine
Commissioner

42 Broadway
New York, NY 10004

Dial 311
(212-NEW-YORK)

nyc.gov/dcwp

Remarks as Prepared: DCWP Commissioner Levine Delivers Remarks at Brooklyn Public Library Graduation Ceremony

June 26, 2026

Good morning, graduates!

To you, your families, your instructors, and everyone who helped make today possible, including the incredible staff at the Brooklyn Public Library—congratulations! It is an honor to be here to celebrate your accomplishments.

Now, I don't have to tell you what it took to get to this moment. Long journeys, long nights, long odds. None of it was given.

Each of you arrived here by a different path. Indeed, that is what makes *this* ceremony special. Some of you balanced classes with jobs, others with caregiving responsibilities. Some of you overcame setbacks, interruptions, or challenges that might have convinced someone else to give up.

But you didn't. You kept going. And today is your moment to walk across this stage with a diploma or a certification.

You are leaving with something so incredibly valuable, something no one can take away from you. Today is not only proof of a powerful notion—that you can set a goal for yourself and achieve it—but it is proof of the very idea of New York City itself: that anyone, through hard work and sheer persistence, can make it here.

As Commissioner of the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, I spend a lot of time thinking about work. About what makes a dignified workforce. About what makes an economy fair and transparent. About what government can do to ensure that people who put in an honest day's work have a real opportunity to get ahead.

Many of you are about to embark on new careers, if you are not entering the workforce for the very first time. Some of you are set to work in hotels, taking charge at front desks and helping visitors navigate the greatest city in the world. You will solve problems, quell frustrations,



respond to questions, and help foster experiences that people carry with them long after their trip ends.

I want to be clear. Work that is deeply rooted in New York City communities, where we care for other human beings, matters.

The representative greeting guests at a hotel. The worker answering phones. The employee covering a late shift. The housekeeper preparing a room. The cashier, the delivery worker, the home care worker.

Our city runs because millions of people like you—people who show up and hustle each and every day with professionalism, respect, and resolve. You deserve a city that shows up and hustles for you in the same way.

And that is exactly what we are striving to do.

New York City: I'm proud to share that we are home to the strongest worker protection laws in the country—and we are bold and aggressive in enforcing them.

At DCWP, we uphold laws that shield workers from unfair scheduling practices. We ensure that employers provide paid safe and sick leave and protected time off. And every year, we help return millions of dollars to workers who were denied what they were owed.

This is true for all those of you entering the hospitality industry. Under New York City's landmark Hotel Licensing Law, hotels must post a city license, staff overnight desks and security, train workers to identify signs of human trafficking, and employ core workers directly. There's also the Hotel Service Disruption Act, which requires guests to be notified within 24 hours of major disruptions—including worker strikes—with the option to cancel without penalty.

Those protections exist for a simple reason: no one should have to choose between their paycheck and their safety. No one should have to surrender their dignity in order to make a living. And no one should have to navigate the workplace alone.

That's the promise of my department and our mayor, Zohran Mamdani, who is making historic investments in the work we do at DCWP.

Graduates: as you take this next step in your careers, know that these protections exist for you. Know, too, that there are people in this city whose job is to stand up for your rights.



So as you start the next chapter of your career, rest assured that my department is here for you—as a worker, as a consumer, as a New Yorker. And we have a simple goal: to deliver economic justice and a city we can all afford.

One of the core ways we do that is through our Financial Empowerment Centers. At more than 40 locations citywide, we offer free, confidential, one-on-one financial counseling to help all New Yorkers set and achieve their financial goals.

Our counselors can help you create a budget, open a safe and affordable bank account, and start saving more as part of your rainy day plan. I encourage all of you to check it out and help us spread the word about this transformative resource.

But don't just take it from me. Our centers have helped tens of thousands of New Yorkers reduce their debt by more than \$126 million and increase their savings by more than \$14 million. Let me end with an important note.

No matter where you live or what language you speak; no matter what type of work you perform, and no matter your immigration status—you have rights on the job, and **you are not alone** in applying them.

If you experience pushback or are having issues using your Protected Time Off, file a complaint online immediately at nyc.gov/workers. DCWP will step in.

You deserve nothing less. And you can expect nothing less from us.

Graduates, you've worked so hard for this moment—and it is finally here.

Congratulations to the Class of 2026!