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Remarks as Prepared: DCWP Commissioner Levine Delivers Remarks Announcing Settlement with HungryPanda

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Thank you, Deputy Mayor Su and Mayor Mamdani, for always standing up for this city's consumers, workers, and small businesses.

Today's announcement is an important one. Yes, we are celebrating more than half a million dollars being returned to restaurants across New York City. But we are also making a broader point.

There's a well-worn tactic of calling government action anti-business and government inaction pro-business. Today's announcement turns that argument on its head.

This is the first-ever DCWP action enforcing the city's cap on junk restaurant fees. The first time we've been able to deliver tens of thousands of dollars in relief to small restaurants. And it's the first time a delivery app has been required to pay a civil penalty for violating this law.

In this new era in New York City, we recognize that business is not a monolith. Some of the largest firms in the world exploit small businesses in the same ways they exploit consumers.

Mayor Mamdani has charged DCWP with leading a citywide crackdown on junk fees, and we're delivering. From a nation-leading ban on hotel junk fees to lawsuits against companies that rip people off with installation fees, storage fees, and towing fees, we are working every day to get money back in consumers' pockets.

But today's action makes clear: it's not only consumers being hit with junk fees.

What we see in this case is HungryPanda deploying a host of tricks and traps to obscure from restaurants how much they were actually paying. A commission fee. A merchant promotion fee. Receipts full of mystery charges and fuzzy math. These tactics should sound familiar to any New Yorker who has ever been nicked and dimed.



And the restaurants being cheated didn't have large accounting firms or legal teams to sort this out. These were small businesses, many of them immigrant-owned.

In fact, this was part of HungryPanda's strategy: positioning itself as the go-to app for users more comfortable ordering in Asian languages, then using that positioning to exploit the very restaurants it was supposed to serve.

Just a few weeks ago, DCWP announced a separate action against HungryPanda for underpaying its workers – also immigrants. The pattern is clear. And the response from the City of New York is decisive.

So to anyone watching this announcement, do not let the adorable pandas distract from the message: if you think you can get away with ripping off immigrant businesses and workers in this city, you are wrong. If you think you can bury junk fees in mystery charges and fuzzy receipts, we will find them. And if you break the law, we will hold you accountable – without fear or favor.

Because vigorous enforcement is not anti-business. Vigorous enforcement means money back in the pockets of small businesses. It means money back in the pockets of workers. It means money back in the pockets of consumers.

This has been DCWP's mantra every day over these last 100 days, and we will only redouble our effort going forward. I am incredibly grateful to Mayor Mamdani and Deputy Mayor Su for their steadfast leadership in making New York fairer and more affordable. And I'm especially grateful to our DCWP staff – not only our attorneys but our investigators and support staff – for fighting every day on behalf of New Yorkers being ripped off – New Yorkers who can't hire lobbyists or lawyers to protect their interests. The people of this city deserve nothing less.

Thank you.