



Get To Know The Storefront Business Bill Of Rights

Right to Renew: Int. 2299-2021, the Storefront Business Bill of Rights introduced by Council Member Helen Rosenthal and Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, creates a structure around the lease renewal negotiation process by taking best practices from small business advocates, real estate owners, and brokers and making them a city standard. This structure ensures clear communication for offers and counteroffers during the negotiation period. Most importantly, it provides good tenants a right to renew for up to a year if the parties cannot come to an agreement. This will give both sides time to explore other options and decide their next steps or come back to the negotiating table.

Lease Transparency: Landlords will be required to provide a history of repairs, construction and violations pertaining to the property. They must also share a line-item break down of costs tied to the space such as taxes, utilities, and Business Improvement District fees. The bill requires both parties to provide and update contact information as well as establish a written contract requirement for any rental agreement lasting more than a year. These protections ensure small business owners have a clear understanding of their financial commitment, rights and responsibilities.

Enhanced Government Services: The City would be required to provide model commercial leases in the designated citywide languages with optional clauses. A large portion of New York City's entrepreneurs are immigrants who may not be able to afford legal services or do not speak English as their first language. The City drafted leases help landlords comply with the bill's lease requirement while ensuring that small business owners comprehend the legally binding document they are signing. City approved leases in various languages ensure transparency and legal protections to small business owners and landlords that cannot be provided by a 'handshake' agreement.

This bill establishes an online City portal for to help businesses navigate permits, fines, and other issues plaguing our small business community. Additionally the City will be required to provide free accounting and financial software platforms for small businesses in New York City.

Time to Act: This bill was designed to pass legal muster where other bills tackling commercial rent issues may not. Any legislation seeking to impact commercial leases only applies to leases signed after the law comes into effect. With the high number of vacancies across the city, we have to take the opportunity to pass stronger commercial tenant protections now as our businesses return and vacancies are filled.

If you have any questions about the legislation, please reach out to Madhuri Shukla at Council Member Rosenthal's office (646)265-4928 or mshukla@council.nyc.gov or to Daniel Alam at Borough President Brewer's office at (646)761-7491 or dalam@manhattanbp.nyc.gov.