



NYS LATINO RESTAURANT BAR & LOUNGE ASSOCIATION

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Comments of Sandra Jaquez

President

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Before the

**New York State Senate Committees on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions &
Investigations and Government Operations**

Regarding

SLA Reforms

Chairs Comrie and Skoufis and all members of the committees here today – thank you for having this important hearing on the State Liquor Authority (SLA) and Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Law reforms. I am glad to be here to share comments on the promising reforms and steps the SLA can take to bring this process into the 21st century and provide a better SLA experience for restaurants and nightlife venues. I am Sandra Jaquez, President of the New York State Latino Restaurant Bar & Lounge Association (NYSLRBLA), which is a non-profit organization representing the interests of hundreds of Hispanic, minority, and immigrant-owned restaurants and nightlife venues throughout New York City.

In addition to my role as President of the Association, I am also an entrepreneur and restaurant owner in Inwood. During my decades of experience in the hospitality industry, I have seen firsthand how outdated laws can hinder the growth of small businesses and create many challenges. The current ABC Laws are restrictive for new and existing business owners and limit their ability to adapt to evolving consumer preferences, changing neighborhoods, and growth opportunities. The proposed reforms to the SLA and ABC laws offer a chance to uplift New York restaurants, bars, and nightlife establishments and remove the prohibition-era policies currently in place.

The Association has worked with industry partners to advocate for the recommendations that came out of the Commission to Study Reform of the ABC laws last year. These recommendations are reasonable and practical and would present a transformative opportunity for business owners to thrive in a more dynamic and supportive regulatory environment.

The Association supports the recommendations made by the Commission as well as those made by the Governor including:

- 1) Allowing restaurants to buy directly from liquor retailers, which would ease hardships small businesses face in purchasing their liquor;
- 2) Amending the 200 and 500-foot law, an important step in fostering new businesses especially those in densely populated and mixed-use neighborhoods;
- 3) Expanding eligibility for temporary liquor licenses, which would ease the difficulties faced by restaurants and nightlife venues by removing the two-year active license burden.

I also want to point out three critical proposals currently in the Governor's budget and for which we are urging the legislature to keep whole when they present their one-house bills:

- 4) Dedicated resources to eliminate the backlog at the State Liquor Authority and speeding up the permitting timeline, which will especially help new restaurants and bars during their start-up;
- 5) Allowing the sale of alcohol in outdoor dining structures situation across bike lanes, a critical component to the success of outdoor dining, which allowed businesses to continue the operations conducted during the pandemic; and
- 6) Making permanent the drinks-to-go program, an important addition in the 30-day amendments.

All of these changes would allow businesses to provide greater service to their customers while also fostering new business and jobs. Our hospitality businesses should be given the tools to succeed. Updating the ABC laws and streamlining the SLA process will help do just that for the hospitality industry, a key part of NYC's cultural fabric. We hope the State Legislature will support the Commission's recommendations as well as the Governor's proposals.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.