



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

With New York's Small Businesses On The Brink, Senate Deputy Leader Gianaris Stands With Entrepreneurs Calling For Rent Forgiveness In Wake Of Covid-19 Pandemic

MICHAEL GIANARIS August 5, 2020

| ISSUE: **#CANCELRENT**, **RENT RELIEF**, **SMALL BUSINESS**, **TENANTS**, **COVID-19**



ASTORIA – Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris stood with small business owners to call for rent forgiveness to keep these small businesses up and running. Senator Gianaris authored legislation ([S.8125-a](#)) that would forgive three months rent for small businesses and residents. He was joined by Queens small business owners, including Shawn Dixon, of Otis and Finn barbershop, and Roseann McSorley, who hosted the press conference at her

restaurant Katch Astoria. The two businesspeople co-authored a Sunday *New York Daily News* [op-ed](#) demanding help.

“We are in the midst of a small business catastrophe the likes of which we’ve never seen before,” said **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris**. “If we don’t provide immediate relief to these mom and pop neighborhood institutions, they are unlikely to survive and the character of our city will change for the worse.”

Under Senator Gianaris’ proposal, residential and commercial tenants would have 90 days of rent forgiven if they lost their work or closed due to the coronavirus pandemic. Senator Gianaris introduced legislation but has also calling for its implementation through the quickest means possible, including by executive order.

New York businesses have taken a significant economic hit during the covid-19 pandemic. According to a [report](#) released this week by the New York Hospitality Alliance, 83% of New York restaurants, bars, and nightclubs did not pay their full July rent, with nearly 40% unable to pay anything at all.

Roseann McSorley, owner of Katch Astoria, said, “Small businesses are families struggling with our own home rents and costs of raising our families, and when a business closes its doors, it means dozens more families are faced with personal hardship. We have done everything we can for the past four months to stay afloat, but we are running out of lifelines and desperately need our government to take action to save Queens’ small businesses.”

Shawn Dixon, owner of Otis and Finn, said, “When the government called on us to close our business earlier this year, causing us to go over three months with almost no revenue, we did that in the name of public health. We did that for our communities. We believed our leaders when they said, “we’re in this together.” But, now, here we are five months later having put

thousands of dollars into our business just to reopen and months behind on rent, and small businesses are instead left all alone holding the bag. We're calling on our leaders to step up and do their part to this situation right. Rent relief would go a long way towards doing just that and helping our communities and small businesses survive. I thank Senator Gianaris for standing with small businesses through this, and fighting for rent forgiveness on our behalf."

Shelia Lewandowski, who operates the Chocolate Factory Theater, said "Theaters were the first to shut down and will be the last to open, if we open. We need rent to be cut at least as much as our use to make up for lost income. The City needs the arts. We are small businesses. We pay employees. We pay artists. If we can't open, why should artists stay."

Photos of today's press conference are [available here](#).

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Coronavirus

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- - In Committee Assembly
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 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Relates to suspending rent payments for certain residential tenants and small business commercial tenants and certain mortgage payments for ninety days in response to the outbreak of covid-19

March 23, 2020

In Senate Committee [Judiciary](#)

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Do you support this bill?