

My name is Dan Hogle and I am an organizer at The Black Institute. I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of our executive director and founder, Bertha Lewis and small businesses across New York State and New York City that have been impacted by the pandemic. These businesses have been left in the lurch as a result of the inadequate attempts to provide economic relief by all levels of government.

While this hearing is focused on the federal government's response, there is plenty of inadequacies and inaction to go around Albany and City Hall. New York City and New York State residents need the "progressives" we elected to seize the moment and the tremendous power of government and take steps that will actually end up being impactful. If not now, during this crisis, when?

I would like to highlight some of the work we are doing on behalf of small businesses prior to the pandemic and highlight the need for cooperation with our state and local legislators.

The Black Institute has been advocating on behalf of minority and women owned businesses for the entire ten years the organization has been in existence. Most recently, we worked directly with minority owned restaurants, bars and nightlife businesses.

These small businesses, that provide the culture and the character of neighborhoods we claim to celebrate, were on their last leg before Covid-19. They were denied access to capital, harassed by landlords and terrorized by the SLA and the NYPD. Our 2019 report showed that SLA licensed businesses within minority census tracts were raided at 4 times the rate of less diverse neighborhoods levying fines up to forty thousand dollars in a single enforcement action.

These businesses were among the first to be shuttered and minority and women owned bars, restaurants and nightlife are at the greatest risk to never open again.

We are thankful for Assemblyman Mosely and Senator Comrie for introducing legislation on behalf of the Black Institute that will provide greater accountability and transparency for the SLA's enforcement actions. We hope to have the support of this committee on those bills.

(Senate Bills 8152 and 8153)

We also will be addressing this committee to organize a joint Senate Hearing to address the disproportionate and racist enforcement that has gone unchecked. This must be investigated, and direct relief must be provided to impacted businesses. These bars and restaurants should be allowed to focus on saving their livelihood and not paying their last dime to an SLA penalty.

In the wake of Covid-19 we have continued to organize small business owners by forming the Minority Merchants Council. The MMC is a group that consists of minority-owned small business owners from various professional backgrounds and civic organizations.

The Council was created to help tackle issues that have surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic that puts small businesses at a disadvantage. Specifically, we will be working together to provide technical assistance, advocacy, support to access capital, and other resources for minority businesses in Southeast Queens and Brooklyn.

We recently created a survey which is specifically directed to assessing the needs of minority small business during COVID-19. The initial results of the survey have revealed the main difficulty these businesses face during this pandemic is access to capital and technical assistance. Most of these minority businesses are unable to apply for these businesses because they lack the capability. Those that did apply to federal programs such as PPP and EIDL are not been awarded the federal grants and loans because the money is going towards bailing out big corporations. These same banks that red lined our neighborhoods and refuse to provide fair lending have been empowered to dictate who is eligible for relief and that is unacceptable.

Once again minorities and minority businesses are being left out of the loop, which is why we have sent out letters to members of our federal representatives and City Officials, urging them to ensure that M/WBEs and minority communities are not left out of the rebuilding process during and post COVID-19.

The offices of Senator Gillibrand and Comptroller Stringer have been responsive and have shown a willingness to work with the MMC. We are still waiting on responses from the other elected officials and again look to this committee to join us in advocating for these businesses.

We are dedicated to making sure minority small businesses are not left behind to rot when all of this is over. We must take action ourselves because it is clear that Washington DC is far too dysfunctional to address the needs of small businesses in New York, particularly minority business owners.

We implore members of this committee to work with The Black Institute and support our efforts, fighting for small businesses and individuals on the ground. . Minorities are dying at a disproportionate rate. Don't let minority businesses continue to die from this virus too.

Contact

Dan Hogle

Dhogle@Theblackinstitute.org