



**Brooklyn Chamber  
of Commerce**

**The  
Brooklyn  
Alliance**

June 19, 2017

**Written testimony submitted by the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce to the NYC Council Committee on Consumer Affairs regarding Enforcement of New York City's Cabaret Law; and Establishing an Office of Nightlife and a Nightlife Task Force**

Good Afternoon Chair Espinal, Jr., other committee members, and guests. I am Melissa Chapman, Senior Vice President for Public Affairs at the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce and I am delivering testimony on behalf of Andrew Hoan, President and CEO of the Brooklyn Chamber.

With over 2,100 active members, the Brooklyn Chamber is the largest Chamber of Commerce in New York State. We promote economic development across the borough of Brooklyn, as well as advocate on behalf of our member businesses. The Brooklyn Alliance is the not-for-profit economic development affiliate of the Brooklyn Chamber, which works to address the needs of businesses through direct assistance programs.

We are very supportive of this committee's proposal to establish a Nightlife Task Force to identify common regulatory issues that pose serious challenges to nightlife operators, and subsequently make recommendations to effectively address them. This is exactly the type of forward-thinking support that small businesses need to thrive in our city. According to the proposal, once the bill is enacted, the Nightlife Task Force must hold one public hearing in each borough. We urge that a special effort be made to engage the local Chambers of Commerce in this process, since we have a direct connection to nightlife operators, and we can be very effective in serving as a liaison between these establishments and the taskforce.

By extension, the Brooklyn Chamber also agrees with the proposal to establish an Office of Nightlife to further advocate for nightlife operators. The provision that this office will monitor 311 complaints against nightlife establishments, and assist them to navigate city licensing requirements will prove to be very valuable tools for small businesses, who typically do not have the time nor resources to challenge frivolous accusations, and address compliance issues where needed. To increase the effectiveness of this office, we highly recommend that the Office of Nightlife include a mobile component in its outreach efforts, since small business owners find it very challenging to leave their establishments and go to a city office to get assistance. We encourage utilization of the city's existing Chamber on the Go program, which goes directly to businesses to save them time and resources.

On the subject of New York City's Cabaret Law, we respectfully suggest that it should be repealed, because it poses stringent limitations on nightlife establishments, and is therefore bad for business. One of the sticking points of this law is that it makes it illegal for three or more people to dance at a nightlife establishment without a cabaret license, which is very difficult and expensive to acquire. As such, at any moment nightlife operators can face burdensome fines and face closures. In the Brooklyn Chamber's 2016 state Member Issues Survey, twenty-one percent of respondents identified government regulations, fines and violations as a severe obstacle to doing business, whereas, twenty-five percent said that it was a problem.

Nightlife establishments contribute greatly to job creation and economic stability in our city. If they are to thrive, they will need more support from government agencies, and less red-tape. We applaud this committee's efforts for inviting stakeholders to discuss proposals for making this a reality, and we look forward to working with the NYC Council to create a welcoming environment for businesses in our city, with Chamber on the Go being a



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key component of this process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in this matter.

AH/mc