

The Small Business Agenda for New York City

As America's entrepreneurship hub, New York City depends on the success of its small business community, with small businesses representing more than 90% of all businesses and employing nearly half of all New Yorkers in the private sector.¹ It is therefore essential that the needs and aspirations of New York's small businesses remain at the forefront of an inclusive economic agenda that supports growth, innovation and opportunity for all.

Small Business Majority encourages Mayor-Elect Mamdani and his administration to consider the following recommendations to ensure that small businesses across New York City have access to the resources and opportunities they require to remain the pillars of the city's communities.

Foster a level playing field for New York City small businesses

As corporate consolidation and anti-competitive business practices continue to stifle competition across industries, the playing field on which small businesses operate is an increasingly uneven one. Our [research](#) shows 80% of small business owners agree that large companies have too much control over markets and that local, state and federal governments need to step in to help create a more level playing field.² While New York City has always been deemed the hub of opportunity and entrepreneurship, we are quickly losing our ability to innovate as more businesses have closed than opened in [recent years](#).³ With rising commercial rent, limited procurement opportunities, and burdensome regulations and fees, our small businesses are being priced out in favor of large corporations that take advantage of the City's zoning and tax incentives. We must enact policies to ensure that small businesses compete on a level playing field.

- The cost of commercial rent in New York City is a significant barrier for new and existing small business owners.
 - **The City must create fair and transparent requirements for commercial leasing agreements.** Too often, landlords use complicated, hard-to-understand lease terms that jeopardize a small business' ability to maintain and grow its business. The City should incentivize landlords to offer longer leases to independent businesses.
 - Small businesses are being pushed out of the City or closing up shop because their commercial rent is unaffordable. We must protect small businesses by replicating the tenant rent stabilization and **creating universal rent stabilization for our small businesses.**
- **The City must reduce burdensome regulations and licensing requirements for small business owners** to run their business, and allow a cure period for any violation after proper notice, outreach and education. Currently, small business owners must jump through regulatory hoops to start their businesses and often are fined for unclear or opaque violations. And our [research](#) shows that adhering to industry or government regulations remains a key challenge facing 50% of small businesses.⁴
- With the City's \$115 billion budget, there must be a concerted effort to **award more of the City's contracts to small businesses.** Procurement is a meaningful way that the City can empower small business owners, particularly minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE), to grow their business and workforce.
- The biggest corporations are the largest beneficiaries of City **subsidies, tax breaks and incentives.** The City must conduct an audit of these subsidies and find a solution to ensure that these benefits are targeted toward our smallest businesses instead of the largest corporations, leveling the playing field.

- With [60%](#) of the City’s restaurant and food service workforce being foreign-born—and immigrants comprising 36% of restaurant owners nationwide—the Mamdani administration must **provide training and guidance for small businesses that could be subject to ICE raids**.^{5,6} [Nearly half \(47%\)](#) of small business owners we polled recently said that increased immigration enforcement has had a negative impact on their business.⁷ The administration must prioritize “know your rights” trainings and increase its efforts around workforce development support for businesses struggling with worker shortages due to deportations, or fear of deportations. Workforce issues are a top issue for small business owners, and ensuring that we keep businesses open, even in the event of deportations, is critical to keeping our small businesses afloat.

Bolster a Main Street-friendly workforce through childcare access

Limited access to affordable and accessible childcare continues to disrupt the sustainability and growth of small businesses. Nearly [60%](#) of entrepreneurs report taking significant time away from their business due to childcare challenges, while employee absences caused by childcare issues directly contribute to lower productivity and lost revenue—putting more strain on a business’s finances.⁸ Without a robust and affordable childcare infrastructure, New York City cannot support diverse entrepreneurship. We must increase the childcare provider workforce and lower costs for families with robust public investments.

- In New York state, the childcare workforce earns less than 97% of all workers. With poverty-level wages, long hours and minimal benefits, licensed childcare providers are leaving the field in droves. From 2014 to 2022, there was a 68% decline in family childcare in New York City.⁹ **The City must incentivize new providers to enter the field** and retain the current workforce.
- The process to become a licensed childcare provider is difficult to navigate, lengthy and expensive. **The City must speed up the municipal licensing process** to quickly increase the workforce and decrease costs so providers can start their small business and serve their community without incurring burdensome debts from the licensing process.
- New York City’s workforce—including small business employees and employers—depends on local, high-quality, affordable childcare. This is especially important for those in the [Bronx and Brooklyn](#) where childcare and out-of-school care costs can amount to as much as 63% of the median income.¹⁰

Ensure equitable access to responsible capital and opportunities for entrepreneurs

With ever-changing tariff increases, unprecedented federal cuts to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund and the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), New York City small business owners are expected to face a steep decline in access to capital. This funding gap will likely be filled by predatory actors looking to exploit small businesses at a time of vulnerability. With the near elimination of the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, New York must step in to ensure protections for small businesses. The City must work swiftly to create policies that protect entrepreneurs from predatory lenders and create programs that fill these capital gaps.

- **Install meaningful city-level protections to ban unfair, deceptive and abusive lending practices.** Small business owners—particularly those from minority and immigrant communities—are often ignored by traditional lending institutions or lack personal banking relationships, leaving them vulnerable to predatory lenders when they need capital. Although New York was once the leading state when it came to protecting small businesses from predatory actors, now we have fallen behind. Forty-two states have already raised the bar, expanding prohibitions to outlaw unfair and abusive conduct, and it’s time New York City did the same.
- As tariffs continue to squeeze small business owners and create an unpredictable purchasing market, costs are becoming unbearable for our entrepreneurs who may not have the option of raising prices in a struggling economy. **The City should increase support for its small business lending programs** like the NYC Small Business Opportunity Fund and NYC Future Fund to increase access to capital for our smallest businesses.

How Small Business Majority can help

As Mayor-Elect Mamdani begins transitioning into his new role, Small Business Majority offers our support in ensuring that small businesses' voices are heard at City Hall. Having previously served on Denver Mayor Mike Johnston's transition team in 2023 in her former role as Colorado Director, New York City-based New York Director Lindsey Vigoda is uniquely qualified to assist. We are here to be connectors and facilitators in any capacity needed by:

- **Advising the Mom & Pop Czar:** We applaud Mayor-Elect Mamdani for emphasizing the importance of small businesses throughout his campaign. His promise of appointing a Mom & Pop Czar is one critical step in ensuring our city's entrepreneurs are at the forefront of every decision. Small Business Majority will happily advise the czar on strategy, policy implementation, outreach and more, as New York City becomes, once again, the top U.S. city for entrepreneurship.
- **Bringing partners and small business owners to the table:** Over the past 20 years, we have built strong relationships with over 1,500 partner organizations across the nation and roughly 50 here in New York City, including business support organizations, local chambers of commerce, community organizations, issue advocates and mission-driven lenders. We are successful in uniting diverse groups to take collective action. During the same period, we have built a national network of 85,000 small business owners and a New York City network of more than 1,000, including a trained cadre of small business spokespeople whom we regularly mobilize to share the real-world stories of the challenges they face and the impact of public policies on their businesses and lives.
- **Supporting media and storytelling campaigns:** We regularly provide small business owners and trusted local coalition partners with trainings, toolkits, sign-on campaigns and opportunities to engage directly with policymakers and the media. We also have relationships with local media that we can utilize to elevate key policy issues.
- **Formulating policy solutions:** In addition to sharing our insights on policy solutions that can drive small business growth, we regularly engage with small business owners and trusted local partners to share their expertise and insights.

¹ "Small Business First Better Government. Stronger Businesses.," July 2014, City of New York, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/smallbizfirst/downloads/pdf/small-business-first-report.pdf>

² "Small businesses seek a level playing field and chance to compete fairly," March 2022, Small Business Majority, <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/small-businesses-seek-level-playing-field-and-chance-compete-fairly>

³ "How Has New York Remade Itself Since the Pandemic Arrived?," March 2025, The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/13/nyregion/nyc-covid-pandemic-changes.html>

⁴ "Voice of Main Street: Small business optimism declines amid concerns about tariffs, healthcare," August 2025, Small Business Majority, <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/sites/default/files/research-reports/2025-August-Voice-of-Main-Street-Report.pdf>

⁵ "Annual Report on New York City's Immigrant Population and Initiatives of the Office," 2023, NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/immigrants/downloads/pdf/MOIA-2023-annual-report.pdf>

⁶ "Restaurant Owner Demographics" April 2025, National Restaurant Association, <https://restaurant.org/getmedia/a618a883-6705-4018-8b1b-9c74d8d99d23/nra-data-brief-restaurant-owner-demographics-april-2025.pdf>

⁷ "Voice of Main Street: Small businesses support healthcare premium relief, immigration reform," November 2025, Small Business Majority, <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/voice-of-main-street/small-businesses-support-healthcare-premium-relief-immigration-reform>

⁸ "Small businesses support policy solutions to address our nation's childcare challenges," April 2024, Small Business Majority, <https://smallbusinessmajority.org/our-research/workforce/opinion-poll-small-businesses-support-policy-solutions-address-our-nation-s-childcare-challenges>

⁹ "High Calling, Low Wages - Home-Based Early Care and Education Providers in New York City," Sept. 2023, The New School, <https://www.centernyc.org/reports-briefs/high-calling-low-wages-home-based-early-care-and-education-providers-in-new-york-city>

¹⁰ "CCC Brief: From Birth to Age 12. The (Un)Affordability of Child Care and Out-of-School Care in New York City," October 2023, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, <https://cccnewyork.org/data-publications/from-birth-to-age-12-child-care-and-out-of-school-care>