



Dear Members of the Committee on Local Government,

My name is Matthew Shapiro and I am the legal director of the Street Vendor Project (SVP) at the Urban Justice Center. SVP is a membership-based organization of over 2,000, mostly immigrant, street vendors who work in New York City's public spaces selling food and merchandise. We organize vendors to have their voices heard as well as provide legal and small business assistance.

Street vendors are New York State's smallest businesses, and are an essential part of the fabric of New York City's culture and economy. Nearly 20,000 entrepreneurs, primarily immigrants, people of color, military veterans and women, are employed as street vendors, many existing as part of a shadow economy of workers unable to acquire necessary business licensing to legitimize their business.

An arbitrary cap on the number of general merchandise licenses and mobile food vendor permits, placed in 1979 and 1983 respectively created a punitive system in which would-be entrepreneurs have been forced to either rent a permit from existing permit-holders on an underground market for up to \$25,000, or vend without a permit, facing \$1,000 fines, property confiscation, or even arrest.

There are currently only 853 licenses available for non-veteran general vendors who sell merchandise, with a waitlist of 12,000 New Yorkers. The demand for general vendor licenses is so large, the waitlist itself has been closed for applications for nearly a decade. As of 2016, there were 5,884 individuals on the waitlist to acquire a mobile food vendor permit. The waitlist itself has been closed for applications since 2007.

In my role as SVP's legal director I have represented hundreds of street vendors who have received \$1,000.00 fines for vending without a permit or license. Unfortunately I can provide little helpful advice for these vendors since permits and licenses for food and general vendors are almost impossible to obtain due to the antiquated City laws.

We urge the state legislature to include a one time allocation of \$19 million in this year's budget to formalize the street vending industry in cities with a population of one million. This allocation is supported by language in S1175 sponsored by State Senator Jessica Ramos / A5081 sponsored by Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas, and was included in the Black Puerto Rican Hispanic Asian Caucus People's Budget.

The time is now to formalize the street vending industry, and end the system that is criminalizing valued community members and would-be entrepreneurs. It is the responsibility of the state to act, to effectively regulate this industry, create good jobs for New Yorkers, and

increase sales tax revenue for the state. Including street vendor formalization in this year's budget will benefit our state's smallest businesses, benefit the state with increased sales tax revenue, and create good jobs for New Yorkers to be the owners of their own small businesses.

In conclusion, we request that both chambers of the legislature allocate \$19 million in funding and include legislative language in other one-house budget bills and advocate for its inclusion in the final state budget to formalize the street vending industry.

Sincerely,

*Matthew Shapiro*

Matthew Shapiro  
Legal Director  
Street Vendor Project  
Urban Justice Center

Dear New York State Legislature,

My name is Eric Nava-Perez, I was born, raised, and still live in East Harlem, New York City. Presently, I work as the Latinx & Spanish speaking member organizer at the Street Vendor Project (SVP). The SVP is a member-led organization with more than 2,000 members who are working to create a vendor led movement for permanent change. Our organization works and advocates for the rights of street vendors across New York City. I am here today to voice my support for formalizing the street vending industry in cities with a population of one million or more. This position of mine is supported by language in the following bills: S1175A (Ramos) / A5081 (Gonzalez-Rojas). We urge the state legislature to include a one time allocation of \$19 million in this year's budget to formalize the street vending industry in cities with a population of one million.

Before joining the SVP team I volunteered in a local mutual aid food distribution in my neighborhood and it shocked me at how many of my neighbors, some who sold food as vendors, were lining up for food themselves. My father's closest friend is a food vendor and I have had several conversations with him about his business. He has his mobile food vendor license but he is unable to obtain a permit for his vending unit. Most of his customer base are other working class people that serve the general public, either as food delivery workers in the gig economy or in the ever important construction industry, and they would all benefit from legalizing street vending in our city. For one, it would allow vendors to promote their business without fear of repercussion or persecution by city agencies, including the police department. Another benefit is that it will generate revenues for the state and profits for our city. For customers, it will diversify the options of food and many other products as well as drive some prices down.

It's time to formalize the street vending industry and to put an end to the system that has and continues to criminalize valued community members and would-be entrepreneurs. It is the responsibility of the state to act, to effectively regulate this industry and create good jobs for New Yorkers. Including street vendor formalization in this year's budget will benefit our state's smallest businesses, benefit the state with increased sales tax revenue, and create good jobs for New Yorkers to be the owners of their own small businesses. To end my statement, I want to reiterate mine and SVP's support to invest the sum of \$19 million to support the legalization of the street vending industry.

Thank you for your time and for providing this space to testify before you this afternoon.

Eric Nava-Perez

My name is Maria Angelica Castillo Luna. I am a member of the street vendor project and I sell chopped fruit on 23rd and 6th avenue. I have been selling on the street for 12 years and for those 12 years I have been unable to get a permit to sell legally. I am writing this testimony to support bills s1175/a5081 that would legalize the street vending industry.

The city is not giving permits and it is affecting our livelihood because I can't get the permit legally. We are forced to buy it on the black market for up to 20,000 to \$30,000 for two years and that's not fair. I am a mother and I just want to work to bring food to my children with dignity but with this system it's very difficult because I don't have a permit. I have to work in fear of the police and very expensive tickets. My experience with the police has been traumatic. The city agencies have given me tickets that have been incredibly hard to pay off.

Street Vendors like me are important. We contribute to the city with our taxes that is why we demand that \$19 million dollars be allocated to fund the legalization of the street vending industry. As a vendor I ask the the proposal S1175 pass in the Senate and that A5081 pass in the assembly. We need this proposal to pass because that way we would work and respect the rules of the city. I am a vendor. I am not a criminal.

Dear New York State Legislature,

My name is Maria Morocho. I live in Brooklyn, New York and have been an ice cream vendor for over 10 years. I have work in and around the Bushwick neighborhood. I am a street vendor because when I first came to the United States, a long time ago, it was hard to find stable and available work for a newcomer who doesn't know English. I stayed with that job because I love to see the smiles on the children's faces when I arrive with my ice cream.

It has affected my life not having my own license/permit because I have not been able to sell peacefully and many times my materials such as ice cream have been taken away from me and it cost me a lot of money to recover, including fines.

I would really like us street vendors to be able to work in peace and dignity with permits. That we can move forward with pride in our work, to carry our families forward. This is why I ask that you approve our bill 1175/5081 and also that you allocate a one time investment of \$19 million dollars to properly fund the legalization of the street vending industry.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to us and give us an opportunity to tell our stories and aspirations.

Best regards,

Maria P. Morocho

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Dear New York State Legislature,

My name is Maria Robles and I live at 541 west 142 st in Manhattan. I sell ice cream seasonally, from April to October, the place where I sell is 44th Street and 10th Avenue and then I walk everywhere. I have to stay away from the places where there are more people that might buy my ice cream but I can't for fear of the police arresting me.

One time without having been selling I was just washing my car and they handcuffed me and took me to the police station and locked me up with other prisoners and I was very scared. That had never happened to me before. They gave me tickets almost every year, two or three times a year they gave me tickets because at the stops or festivals I go out to sell but I am not occupying any place, I am walking sometimes with my daughter from one place to another. I have been selling ice cream since 2006 and I always tried to get a permit but I was denied because they said they were no longer giving out permits.

Now I want to tell you that if I work as a street vendor it is because I need to work to help my family, it is not enough what my husband works and there is no work, it is not easy to be a vendor, enduring the intense heat of the sun or the rain is not easy, and after all that not having a permit to work. It is very sad because they take everything from us, they take away our carts and the products that we buy with so much effort, they throw them away. I would like to have a permit to be able to work in peace and not be afraid.

My life would change if I had a permit. I want to ask the congressmen to help us, to support us by giving us permits to be able to work because we are workers and we want to be heard. I also ask that you allocate a one time investment of \$19 million dollars to properly fund the legalization of the street vending industry

Thank you very much legislators for listening to us.

Dear New York State Legislature,

My name is Maria I. Shinin, I live at 200 Schermerhorn Apt. 420, Brooklyn, NY 11201, I sell cut mangoes on the street and I have been doing this activity since 2013, in order to support my family and pay my expenses such as rent, food, tickets, and everything in general.

In 2013 I lost my job and I was alone with my children whom I had to support, so I started selling mangoes to support my family. But since I have not been able to obtain a legal permit to sell, it has generated many tickets which I have had to pay in order to continue selling. At the moment they tell us that there are no permits, and if you would help us by making a one time investment of \$19,000,000.00 to properly fund the legalization of the street vending industry and finally obtain permits, we could work freely and without fear of having more tickets or hiding to exercise our activity.

The fact that I can sell mangos helps me contribute to the community because when I buy my merchandise I help other companies to move their economy and I also contribute by paying my taxes. With your investment of \$19,000,000.00 you will help us a lot to obtain permits and be able to contribute more to our community with our taxes and fees.

I thank you for your attention and I reiterate again my request about the investment of \$19,000,000.00 that you could allocate to us street vendors to be able to contribute more and we all benefit.

Sincerely,

Maria I. Shinin



Dear New York State Legislature,

My name is Rosario Troncoso. I live and work in Corona, Queens. I sell general merchandise. I have been a street vendor for 1 year and 8 months. The reason why I started as a street vendor was because I lost my job due to the pandemic and now it is very difficult to find a decent job because I am an immigrant.

For this reason I demand that you pass bill 1175/5081 and set aside \$19 million in the budget to successfully implement the law.

This would benefit you as a government and us as street vendors because you will have better control over the street vending economy and we will have more protection because the police and other departments will not bother us and we will not have to pay so many tickets.

Thank you for your attention,

Rosario Troncoso

Good afternoon. My name is Vicente Veintimilla, I am a street vendor on Fordham Road in the Bronx, and I live at 2420 Grand Ave, Apartment B1, Bronx NY 10468. In the past, I have sold coins, bills, postcards and books and now I sell things like shoe charms and face masks. I have been in business for six years at Fordham and 35 years in total. I'm here today to solicit your support to include a one-time \$19 million request in this year's budget to formalize the street vending industry in cities with a population of one million.

Not having a permit to legally sell on the street has affected me because I am not limited to carrying out this activity in a legal way and nevertheless I have to be aware of the regulatory authorities to avoid unpayable fines and parallel to this is the frustration that this entails. If I could obtain a license, it would positively change my life and that of my family, since the commitment that being a legal merchant implies gives me the opportunity to open new projects for this wonderful state, contributing to economic development and well-being of the general environment.

We small businesses consider ourselves the showcase of large companies and legally established businesses, we protect the popular economy and stimulate trade in general, which results in a valuable direct contribution to the fiscal coffers of the city and the country.

Now is the right time to legalize the industry because the pandemic has displaced so many people from their workplaces, and many of them see an incentive in street vending, replacing unemployment and raising the self-esteem of those of us who have no other income. However, the members of the Senate need to prioritize this single contribution of 19 million, which will be a very fruitful social investment that will pay back more than the allocated amount. Thanks for your time.