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## **DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS OPENS CITY'S NEW LICENSING CENTER OFFERING ENHANCED SERVICES TO FURTHER HELP BUSINESSES THRIVE**

Department of Consumer Affairs Commissioner (DCA) Julie Menin today announced the grand opening of DCA's new Licensing Center in the lobby of 42 Broadway in Lower Manhattan. The 12,700-square-foot space was constructed in six months and provides additional needed space to allow DCA to continue serving businesses in person at a centralized location. This welcoming and easy-to-use Center is part of DCA's ongoing efforts to meet Mayor de Blasio's goal of improving the climate for small business in New York. Earlier this year, DCA implemented a Business Relief Package of nearly two-dozen reforms that are reducing fines in number and cost, as well as increasing transparency, fairness, education and outreach.

"Our wonderful new Licensing Center is a symbol of a 'new' DCA under Mayor de Blasio—accessible, efficient and designed to work for New York City's small businesses," said DCA Commissioner Julie Menin. "Every business that comes through the door will experience enhanced services and we look forward to assisting those businesses as they grow and help our City thrive."

"I applaud the Department of Consumer Affairs for this big step forward in business customer services," said Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett. "The Health Department interacts with tens of thousands of businesses each year, and these improvements will help to both streamline an individual's experience and reduce the time they spend obtaining permits and licenses."

"The city's more than 200,000 small businesses create the vibrant fabric of our neighborhoods, deliver essential goods and services, and provide local jobs, and it is important that the City work together to do all that we can to create an environment where small businesses can start, operate, and thrive," said Maria Torres-Springer, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services. "DCA's new Licensing Center, along with the Small Business First initiatives, will help improve the City's regulatory environment and make it easier for small businesses to do business in New York City."

The new Center features 12 windows accepting all applications and, to streamline the licensing process, each window now has cameras for photo IDs. Testing rooms are

equipped with brand new computers and, in the waiting area, there are now seven kiosks with iPads to help businesses navigate DCA's [Business Toolbox](#) (link to: [Businesses\\_Licenses.docx](#)) and make use of its many convenient functions including downloading inspection checklists, submitting online license applications, paying fines, obtaining and printing necessary documents from City and state agencies, and more. Built with a budget of around \$5 million, the new Center is significantly more cost-efficient than relocating the agency, which was the other choice.

For the first time, a financial counselor from DCA's network of Financial Empowerment Centers now offers free one-on-one financial counseling in the Licensing Center on Mondays and Fridays, by appointment, or for walk-ins, if available. A survey of small business owners this summer showed an interest in meeting with a counselor to discuss personal finances rather than business finances. The counselor has had more than 90 sessions in two months since the launch of the program and, although the counseling is specific to personal finances, the skills and tools that counseling equips clients with are transferable to their businesses. An inspector is also available in the Licensing Center twice a week to answer questions and has assisted nearly 1,800 businesses on how to avoid fines since July.

In October, DCA introduced its new Legal Ombudsman who is dedicated to answering questions that businesses have about the laws that DCA enforces. The Legal Ombudsman is available by calling 311, emailing [legalombudsman@dca.nyc.gov](mailto:legalombudsman@dca.nyc.gov), or during office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays, and has helped more than 100 businesses, many of whom had questions about whether or not they needed a DCA license. The Legal Ombudsman is also helping to identify the concerns of business owners so that DCA can better address their needs.

All of the new [Small Business Relief Package](#) (link to: [SmallBusinessReliefPackageOnePager.pdf](#)) services are highlighted in the new Licensing Center and promoted on the queue management system, which will improve DCA's ability to track customer flow and wait times. The Licensing Center staff offers services in multiple languages, including Spanish, Mandarin, Arabic, Haitian-Creole, Albanian, German, Croatian, French and Italian. For other language needs, each window is equipped with access to the City's over-the-phone translation service so business owners can communicate in their native language. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene uses DCA's Licensing Center as well.

*The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) licenses, inspects, and educates businesses, mediates complaints, educates consumers, and offers free financial counseling and safe banking products. DCA enforces the Consumer Protection Law, the Paid Sick Leave Law and other related business laws throughout New York City and licenses nearly 80,000 businesses in 55 different industries. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses alike about their rights and responsibilities. DCA's Office of Financial Empowerment assists low-income New Yorkers with innovative programs and services to increase access to high-quality, low-cost financial education*

*and counseling, safe and affordable mainstream banking, and access to income-boosting tax credits and savings. For more information, call 311 or visit DCA online at [nyc.gov/consumers](https://nyc.gov/consumers) or on its social media sites, [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).*