



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew Gounardes

Senator Gounardes and Councilman Brannan Demand City Forgive Fines for Restaurants Forced to Change Outdoor Seating Due to Shifting Guidelines

ANDREW GOUNARDES July 15, 2020

| ISSUE: **NYS SENATOR ANDREW GOUNARDES, NYC OPEN RESTAURANTS PROGRAM**

Brooklyn, NY - Senator Andrew Gounardes and Councilman Justin Brannan demanded that the City forgive any fines levied in the NYC Open Restaurants Program on restaurant owners who have been forced to change their outdoor seating plans due to the shifting city guidelines. According to local restaurants and numerous reports, the program added new guidelines after the initial set of guidelines were released - giving restaurants 24 hours to comply with the new rules and costing them thousands of dollars. The officials urged that any fines resulting from changes to the program be forgiven.

“It is outrageous to cause local restaurants, already struggling to stay in business, to have to spend thousands of extra dollars to comply with changing guidelines. It’s great that the city was able to start this program on a short timeline, but that cannot be an excuse for adding changing the rules after restaurants already complied -- the definition of red tape and bureaucracy. The city must forgive any fines levied under this program and commit to clear, consistent guidelines going forward,” said **Senator Andrew Gounardes**.

“No matter what, safety must always come first. I understand this program is brand new and was enacted at a frenetic pace. I also understand the need to get the guidelines right. But

business owners should not be penalized for the city moving the goalposts. Fines should be forgiven, and if guidelines change yet again, then business owners need to be given more time to fix – otherwise we are hurting our small businesses and this program was supposed to help them get through this tough time,” said **Councilman Justin Brannan**.