

**STATEMENT FROM BACP COMMISSIONER ROSA ESCARENO**  
**2021 BUDGET PROPOSAL TO THE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON BUDGET AND GOVERNMENT**  
**OPERATIONS**  
**November 10, 2020**

Good morning Chairman Dowell, Vice Chairman Silverstein and members of the City Council. My name is Rosa Escareno, Commissioner of the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection. I am joined by members of my team:

I would like to thank Mayor Lightfoot for her leadership throughout this budget process and the many challenges of 2020. I would also like to thank all of you for your untiring advocacy on behalf of your communities and your hard work passing critical legislation this year.

Make no mistake – this has been a trying year for our business community. COVID-19 by itself is a once in a century crisis, and when coupled with multiple periods of civil unrest, our businesses have faced a one-two punch unlike anything we could have imagined. It is truly devastating.

As I'm sure you know, BACP has been at the forefront of our City's response to and ongoing recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our efforts have included:

- Standing up the Chicago Microbusiness Recovery Grant Program and supporting other financial relief programs;
- Holding 140 webinars and calling over 27,000 businesses directly to help them understand the COVID-19 guidelines and other regulations;
- Conducting nearly 5,000 COVID-19 related investigations and issuing a little more than 400 citations, which is a clear sign that our business community is following the rules; and
- Working with you all to pass momentous regulatory reform that has provided support to tens of thousands of businesses and workers, including the Anti-Retaliation Ordinance, sidewalk café reforms and business license extensions

While much of our efforts this year have necessarily been focused on the COVID response, our regular day-to-day responsibilities did not go away. As always, we continued working hard to carry out our mission to support businesses, advocate for workers and protect consumers. This included:

- Working with you all to pass historic reforms to our shared housing regulations;
- Implementing a ban on flavored vaping to help keep dangerous tobacco products out of the hands of kids;
- Selecting eight Regional Business Centers, which will bring much needed licensing support to the neighborhoods;
- Launching a study of our Public Vehicle industry, which will help us understand the industry to modernize our regulations and support our drivers;
- Activating remote operations where necessary, including creating the first-ever remote adjudication process.

And while COVID-19 has disrupted so much, we continue to issue business licenses. In fact, since April, we have issued nearly 2,500 new licenses. Among so much devastation this is a small sign of hope - new entrepreneurs are coming through our [virtual] doors every day.

As we near the 8<sup>th</sup> month of the COVID-19 pandemic, with no end in sight, our business community stands at a pivotal moment. That is why I am thrilled to support the Mayor's emergency hospitality relief measures announced last week, and I look forward to working with you to implement a number of measures to support our businesses, including extending lifeline programs like Expanded Outdoor Dining and the Sidewalk Café reforms, and removing the barrier that certain City debts place on businesses.

I am proud of my team and the work we have done this year, and I want to thank Mayor Lightfoot for her fearless and steady leadership throughout a year unlike any other. I wish I could be speaking with you all today under better

circumstances. But we must continue to do everything we can to support our struggling businesses and workers.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer your questions.