



**Testimony to the New York City Council City Council  
Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection  
Oversight in support of Ints. 1264, 1253, 1060, 1062, and 1188: Street Vending in NYC**

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My name is Lamya Agarwala, and I am the Supervising Attorney at the Council on American-Islamic Relations, New York (CAIR-NY). I would like to thank Chair Velazquez and the Committee for the opportunity to provide written testimony.

**Street vendors embody the spirit of New York City**

CAIR-NY's mission is to protect civil liberties, enhance understanding of Islam, promote justice, and empower Muslim Americans. As our City's smallest businesses, street vendors reflect the great diversity of our communities, and are a true embodiment of the entrepreneurial spirit of our city. Innovating, creating, and investing in our local economies, vendors are out every day to provide for their families and feed their neighbors—often targeted and criminalized for doing so. As of 2018, more than 57 percent of street food vendors in New York City are Muslim.<sup>1</sup>

The history of street vending in the City of New York showcases its significance in the local economy. From contributing to the sale of 15% of produce in 1927 to providing nearly 18,000 jobs in 2015, street vending has played a vital role in the city's growth, supporting Muslims, immigrants, people of color, and military veterans to successfully operate microbusinesses. Yet the current way the city regulates street vendors often leaves many in the shadows, harassed, unfairly arrested, and unregulated.

This package of bills will let vendors provide the services New Yorkers want - in a regulated, predictable, enforceable system - and give them a real chance to build wealth in their neighborhoods. The City must not criminalize street vendors for trying to provide for their families, but instead cut the red tape and facilitate a healthy regulatory environment for our smallest businesses to thrive.

**Passing introduced bills will protect street vendors and allow them to thrive**

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<sup>1</sup> [MAP-NYC-Report-Web-3.pdf \(ispu.org\)](#)

The City Council can act now to ensure a functioning regulatory system for vendors by supporting the passage of **Int. 1264 and Intro 1253** with urgency, as part of the Street Vendor Reform legislative package. CAIR-NY also supports the passage of **Intros 1060, 1062, and 1188**.

**Intro 1264 introduced by Council Member Krishnan**, reduces the criminal liability on food and merchandise vending, ensures that our city's smallest businesses face civil, rather than criminal summonses. No one should be at risk of arrest for being one inch too far from the curb, or having a box on the ground, especially in an industry comprised of primarily immigrants. New Yorkers should not have to risk their freedom just to make an honest living. Furthermore, it was included as a unanimous recommendation from Mayor Adams' [Street Vendor Advisory Board](#), which included representatives from city agencies, street vendors, retail food stores, property owners, small businesses, and community organizations.

Siting rules and regulations for licensed and permitted vendors are highly regulated, noting the time, place and manner in which vendors must operate. **Intro 1253 introduced by Council Member De La Rosa** continues this tradition, but it addresses a critical safety hazard that vendors face, specifically the dangerous proximity of a foot and a half or less from the curb - very close to speeding cars and risk of displacement from longtime vending locations.

We look forward to the City Council addressing the most critical reform to the street vending industry as soon as we enter the new year, as outlined in **Intro 1270**. Today, many would-be entrepreneurs are forced to rely on underground markets or work without a license due to the state of our City's street vending system, taking advantage of workers, customers, and fellow small businesses. The bill outlines measures to ensure business licensing and regulatory compliance of all mobile food and merchandise in order to maintain an orderly, regulated street vending system while creating economic opportunity for our City's smallest businesses.

Passing these bills would not only improve the safety of goods sold, increase compliance, and raise revenue for the City, but it would also bring street vending out of the shadows and into alignment with cities across the United States that effectively regulate all vendors.

Thank you for accepting our testimony. It is CAIR-NY's hope that the City Council takes the critical step of passing all of the legislation on the agenda and ensuring Intro 1270 is on the agenda early next session.

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