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# Governor Cuomo Announces Launch of New York Forward Small Business Lease Assistance Partnership

**December 10, 2020**



**Public-Private Partnership Between Empire State Development, Start Small Think Big and the New York State Bar Association Will Provide Small Businesses and Landlords with Pro Bono Legal Assistance to Renegotiate Lease Terms in Wake of COVID-19**

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced the launch of the New York Forward Small Business Lease Assistance Partnership. Recognizing the economic impact of COVID-19, this program will provide small businesses and their landlords with informational resources and pro bono assistance to help both parties reach mutually-beneficial lease workout agreements. This service is available to all New York State small businesses and landlords, and participation is voluntary. Over the next year, the partnership has the capacity to serve thousands of small businesses statewide.

"Small business are the backbone of any strong economy and it is critical that we work to find ways to support them during these difficult times," Governor Cuomo said. "The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the economy has been nothing short of devastating, and through partnerships such as this, we can help to alleviate the burdens many business owners are facing. While a moratorium on commercial evictions is currently in place, this new public-private partnership will help provide an additional level of stability for small businesses and ensure they are able to play a role in helping build New York's economy back better than before."

As part of this program, Empire State Development is partnering with the New York State Bar Association and Start Small Think Big, a New York-based non-profit organization dedicated to supporting small, under-resourced entrepreneurs with high-quality professional services. For this partnership, Start Small will be offering pro bono legal services from its network of more than 1,000 attorneys, to

commercial tenants and landlords seeking lease amendments to cope with the impacts of COVID-19. The New York State Bar Association has served as the voice of the state's legal profession for more than 140 years and will support the recruitment and training of additional volunteer attorneys.

The Small Business Lease Assistance Partnership (https://esd.ny.gov/new-york-forward-small-business-lease-assistance-partnership) website includes information on the lease renegotiation process and details the different types of lease workouts available to help small businesses cope with the financial impacts of COVID-19. Those interested in pro bono assistance to initiate a lease renegotiation are encouraged to review and complete the partnership's intake form (https://protect2.fireeye.com/v1/url?k=d618ce2f-8983f710-d61a371a-000babda0031-c50fd8ad112349d7&q=1&e=ad71f2b1-c6da-4f84-9993-1dfa2dcf42dd&u=https%3A%2F%2Fcovid19.startsmallthinkbig.org%2Frequest%3Ftfa_72%3Dtfa_16010). After completing the form, each small business will receive an email detailing an estimated timeline for placement with a volunteer attorney. Once matched, the volunteer attorney will email the applicant to schedule an appointment.

Empire State Development Acting Commissioner and President & CEO-designate Eric Gertler said, "The COVID-19 pandemic has unfortunately created new and unforeseen economic challenges for small business owners and landlords across the state. Working together with Start Small Think Big and the New York State Bar Association to establish this partnership, our goal is to help commercial tenants and landlords reach mutually-beneficial agreements by engaging in productive discussions and taking advantage of the free legal assistance provided through this program."

Read the full press release here. (https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-launch-new-york-forward-small-business-lease-assistance-partnership)

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