

Signers as of January 7, 2025

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
Executive Chamber
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

We the undersigned food and beverage distributors, food banks, wholesale markets, restaurateurs, nonprofits and small businesses—representing more than 100 companies and organizations—are writing to urge you to take swift corrective action to avoid the serious unintended impacts of the congestion pricing policy set to take effect on January 5, 2025 by **establishing an exemption for essential food and beverage distributors based within the five boroughs.**

While we fully understand and support the goals of reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality in Manhattan, the current proposal creates an undue burden on essential food service businesses that keep New York City's renowned food industry alive. As New York City-based businesses that already contribute separate funding to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority through the Metropolitan Commuter Transportation Mobility Tax, New York City's food and beverage distributors find themselves in the challenging position of being doubly penalized for providing a vital service to our city.

Several critical points warrant your immediate attention:

First, there is no viable alternative for food distribution in New York City. Every restaurant, grocery store, food bank, hospital, school and food retailer in Manhattan depends on truck deliveries for their survival. Very little of the food that our city depends upon is produced inside of the congestion pricing zones. The Hunts Point markets alone handle over 60% of the produce, meat and fish that feeds New York City, millions of pounds of food that cannot travel via public transportation. Our combined fleets of trucks and vans represent the only practical way to maintain the food supply chain that keeps our city running.

Second, as New York City-based businesses serving our own city, many of the undersigned are essentially being doubly penalized for having our operations here. While we understand the need to manage Manhattan's traffic, businesses based in the outer boroughs should not face the same constraints as out-of-state operators when serving our local community. We are New Yorkers serving New York, collectively employing tens of thousands of local residents and contributing significantly to our city's economy. As noted earlier, many of the undersigned are being treated as city-based businesses as it relates to paying the MCTMT Tax, but not treated as part of the city when it comes to the congestion pricing. Many of the businesses and organizations undersigned here will face significant financial challenges based on the new cost.

Third, this policy will create a cascading effect of increased costs throughout the entire food supply chain that may lead to fewer or more costly healthy food options for New Yorkers. The impact of these costs extends far beyond the undersigned of this letter. Our

coalition members serve tens of thousands of restaurants, cafes, food retailers, food banks, hospitals and schools across Manhattan, many of which are themselves small businesses. While we always strive to avoid passing additional operational costs to our customers, this may become inevitable, and the whole industry will face the same challenge. Those small business owners, whose restaurants, stores, and bodegas make our city special for locals and tourists alike, will likely find that they then have to raise their prices for consumers. At a time when New Yorkers are already grappling with inflation and high food costs, this additional financial burden could have severe consequences for businesses, consumers, and the city's economy.

Fourth, this policy will hamper New York City's well established goals related to increasing access to healthy foods and curbing chronic and diet-related diseases. New York City has been a leader in our Nation's fight against chronic and diet-related disease. Chronic and diet-related diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and screenable cancers, continue to be leading causes of death across all racial and ethnic groups in NYC. In 2022, more than 30,000 New Yorkers died from these conditions. The potential for higher costs or fewer healthy food options as a result of this policy will unfairly impact those at the greatest risk of chronic and diet-related disease.

The food service industry is a critical part of New York City's economy and cultural identity. Our coalition members have invested heavily in New York City's infrastructure, and represent a significant employee base. We look forward to working with you to find a solution that properly balances the city's environmental goals with the practical needs of essential businesses.

Please contact our coalition representative Colin O'Neil, Principal of O'Neil Strategies, LLC (colin@oneil-strategies.com) to arrange a meeting where we can discuss these concerns in detail.

Respectfully submitted,

Baldor Specialty Foods | TJ Murphy, Founder & CEO

The Chefs' Warehouse | John Pappas, Founder & Vice Chairman; Chris Pappas, Founder & CEO

FreshDirect | Metin Hacıoglu, Chief Operating Officer

Hunts Point Meat Market, on behalf of the 50 cooperators of the market | Bruce Reingold, General Manager

Hunts Point Produce Market, on behalf of the 27 cooperators of the market | Joel Fierman & Stephen Katzman, Co-chairmen

Fulton Fish Market Cooperative, on behalf of the 22 shareholders of the market | Nicole Ackerina, CEO

Food Bank For New York City | Leslie Gordon, President and CEO

New York Common Pantry | Stephen Grimaldi, Executive Director

Wellness in the Schools | Alexina Cather, Director of Policy and Special Projects

Interstate Foods & Westside Foods | Robert Greenzeig, President

Manhattan Fruit Exchange | Delio & Vito Latilla, Presidents

Acme Smoked Fish | Adam Caslow, Managing Partner

Pierless Fish | Dan MacPherson, General Manager

Crafted Hospitality | Tom Colicchio, Chef & Owner

Grovehouse Hospitality | Sean Feeney, Co-Founder

Wholesome Crave | Michel Nischan, CEO

Red Jacket Orchards | Mark Nicholson, VP of Partnership Development

Food Tank | Danielle Nierenberg, President and Founder

Regalis Foods | Ian Purkayastha, CEO

Whealth Kitchen | David Trotta, Founder

Quattro's Poultry & Game Farm | Joyce Quattrociocchi, Manager

Monte's Seafood Emporium, Inc. | James Montelbano, Treasurer

MiRo Food | Reed Anderson, Director of Sales

Blue Ribbon Fish | Warren Kremin, Manager

Golden Packing Meat Purveyors | David Bernstein, Owner

Victory Food Service Distributors Corp. | Sunder Luthra, General Manager

La Newyorkina, LLC | Daniel Ortiz de Montellano, Operations Manager

Fan Fan Doughnuts | Fany Gerson, Owner

LP Seafood & Specialty | Ian MacGregor, 2nd Generation Owner and CEO

Farm to People | Michael Ray Robinov, Co-Founder & CEO

DeBragga, New York's Butcher | Marc Sarrazin, Président and CEO

New York Restaurant Show | Paul Pedrow

Jaan Distributors Inc | Ramiz Memon, Managing Director

La Trafila LLC | Luigi Speranza, Founder & CEO

Mt Sinai Fish Inc. | Janice Sciabarra, Secretary

M.A.D. FOODS | Amy Farges

Mushrooms and More | Alexa Weaver, Sales and Marketing Manager
Entegra Procurement Services | John Stewart, Director New Business Development
Eli & Ali's | Elijah Ornstein, Managing Director
Casita | Mariah Forstmann
Jillicious Foods & Events | Jill Freiberg, Chef and Owner
COCOTAZO LLC | Frances Roman
Produce Experience Inc. | Juanita Bermudez, VP
Counter & Bodega Inc | Sophie Serrano, President
Bazzini LLC | Jan Friedman, VP Sales
Goldenberry Farms | Christopher Palumbo
Neir's Tavern | Loycent Gordon, CEO & Owner
Dembroski Orchards Inc. | Helene Dembroski
CASASALVO NYC | Salvo Lo Castro
Ceci-Cela Patisserie | Laurent Dupal
Kemach Food Products Corp. | Samuel Salzman, Pres.
Hand Hospitality | Keisuke Oku, President
Balanced Vending Inc | Alon Basel, Founder and CEO
Little Food Co | Erin Pepper, Managing Partner
Katzman Produce | Fred DelDuca, Director of Finance
Montes Fine Foods | PJ Monte, CEO

CC:

Marie Therese Dominguez, Commissioner for Transportation

David Ullman, Assistant Secretary for Transportation

Allison Bradley, Assistant Secretary for Transportation

Richard A. Ball, Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets

Kevin King, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture & Markets

Lindsey McMahon, Senior Policy Advisor for Food & Agriculture

Quinn Rapp-Ellis, Assistant Secretary for Labor & Workforce