

NYS Women's Business Center Collaborative

WBC Testimony: Joint Budget Hearing: Economic Development/ Arts

Dear Honorable Members of the New York State Assembly and Senate, Ways and Means Chair Pretlow, Finance Chair Krueger, Economic Development, Job Creation, Commerce and Industry Chair Stirpe, and Commerce, Economic Development and Small Business Committee Chair Baskin:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony at this joint budget hearing. My name is Delia A. Awusi and I am the Director of the Business Outreach Center (BOC) Network Brooklyn/Staten Island Women's Business Center (WBC). I am providing the below testimony not just on behalf of my WBC but our statewide coalition — the NYS WBC Collaborative — representing all nine WBCs across the state.

Collectively, we serve thousands of entrepreneurs across New York annually, including first-time entrepreneurs, established business owners, veterans, and small businesses operating in both emerging and traditional industries.

Our work prioritizes three key elements:

1. **Entrepreneurial Access & Growth:** Expanding access to business resources, technical assistance, and capital readiness support for women entrepreneurs statewide.
2. **Resilient Economies:** Supporting women-owned small businesses as engines of local economic growth.
3. **Capacity & Sustainability:** Ensuring long-term funding and support for our centers to continue delivering high-impact services across New York.

In this testimony, I particularly want to highlight an economic opportunity for New York State — one that is hiding in plain sight.

Nationally, women-owned businesses are already a major driver of economic growth. According to the Wells Fargo 2025 Impact of Women-Owned Businesses Report, women-owned businesses represent **39% of all U.S. enterprises**, employ **12.9 million workers**, and generate **\$3.3 trillion in annual revenue**.

Between 2019 and 2024 alone, women-owned businesses grew by:



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- **17%** in number
- Nearly **20%** in employment
- More than **50%** in revenue

These are some of the fastest growth rates in the economy.

And yet — despite this scale — women-owned businesses account for only **9.6% of total employment** and just **6.2% of total revenue** nationwide.

That gap is not about ambition or capability. It is about access to capital, technical assistance, and sustained infrastructure.

That gap is even wider here in New York.

While women own nearly 40% of businesses nationally, women-majority owned firms in New York represent only about **23% of all businesses**. That difference represents thousands of unrealized businesses, jobs not created, and economic growth left on the table.

At the same time, New York City alone demonstrates what is possible — hundreds of thousands of women-owned businesses supporting nearly **200,000 jobs** and generating **tens of billions of dollars in annual sales**. The opportunity already exists within our state.

This is where Women's Business Centers, and our collaborative, play a critical role.

The NYS Women's Business Centers are federally designated, performance-tracked economic infrastructure under the U.S. Small Business Administration. We provide:

- One-on-one business counseling
- Workforce-aligned training
- Capital readiness pathways
- Industry-specific support in sectors essential to New York's economy — including childcare, healthcare, financial literacy, construction, manufacturing, food, technology, and **small business supply chain and procurement readiness connected to large-scale**



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events such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

In Fiscal Year 2025 alone, New York's Women's Business Centers:

- Served 4,868 entrepreneurs
- Supported 146 new businesses launched and sustained
- Helped create and retain 532 jobs
- Enabled \$10.97 million in capital accessed through local community financial institutions and banks

These are measurable, auditable outcomes — delivered without creating new bureaucracy.

Federal funding for Women's Business Centers has remained flat for decades at just **\$150,000 per center**, despite rising demand and the growing role women entrepreneurs play in workforce participation and regional economic growth. This is not about replacing federal dollars — it is about aligning state investment with economic reality.

This request directly aligns with Governor Hochul's priorities around small business growth, workforce participation, childcare and essential services, and building a more resilient statewide economy. Women's Business Centers are not aspirational partners — we are already executing on these goals.

We are respectfully requesting **\$1.8 million in New York State funding, or \$200,000 per Women's Business Center**, to deepen investment in women entrepreneurs statewide.

This is not a new program.

It is not a pilot.

It is a strategic investment in proven economic infrastructure.

In closing, this is not simply a conversation about representation. It is an economic one.

New York State has the opportunity to turn underinvestment into growth — and to fully unlock the economic potential of women entrepreneurs who are already driving our economy forward.



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I thank you for your time, your leadership, and the opportunity to provide testimony as you consider budget priorities for FY27.

Respectfully,



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