

MANHATTAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

POLICY BRIEF · ENFORCEMENT UNCOVERED SERIES

Enforcement Uncovered: Single-Use Plastics.

Five years in: what the city's records show about New York City's plastic straw law

A policy brief from the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce · November 1, 2026

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Key findings

New York City's plastic straw law turns five on November 1, 2026. It took effect on November 1, 2021; for first violations that occurred before November 1, 2022, the law required a warning instead of a fine. This brief checks in on the law at its anniversary: how it has been enforced, who has paid, and what the city knows about whether it works.

Three city agencies can enforce the law: the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP), the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Department of Sanitation. This brief draws on the public records of all three, covering July 3, 2023 through July 30, 2026, and breaks the figures out for Manhattan. The records show that two agencies treat the law mainly as a compliance matter. The third, DCWP, has made it one of its most-used charges against bodegas and delis, applied most often for a missing sign.

1. **One agency accounts for four of every five recorded straw-law violations.** Of 7,767 straw-law violations recorded across the three agencies, DCWP issued 6,141 (79%). The Health Department recorded 1,586 at restaurants, and the Department of Sanitation, which the law directs to conduct outreach and education about its requirements, issued 40 summonses heard at the city's administrative court.
2. **Bodegas and delis carry the law.** Businesses in DCWP's grocery-retail license category, most commonly delis and bodegas, received 5,235 of the 7,767 violations (67%), and 85% of DCWP's charges. Restaurants account for most of the rest.
3. **Nearly three in ten DCWP straw-law inspections cited only the sign.** Of 4,755 DCWP inspections that produced a straw-law charge, 1,383 (29%) cited the missing "Plastic straws available upon request" sign and nothing else under the law. Counting all 2,398 sign citations, the sign charge is the 14th most frequently cited of the 669 charge types in DCWP's enforcement records. The Health Department cited the sign alone in 14% of its straw-law inspections.
4. **Most businesses are not charged again at a later inspection.** 81% of the businesses DCWP charged under the law were not charged again at a later inspection in the period, including 73% of those first charged before 2025, and 96% of the restaurants the Health Department cited were not cited again at a later inspection. The records do not show whether those businesses corrected the violation. Yet of 2,997 DCWP straw-law charges with a cure flag, 2,992 were marked not cure-eligible. Across all DCWP charge records with a cure flag, 16% were cure-eligible.
5. **A first-time cure could have spared businesses much of the cost.** Businesses have paid more than $300,000 attributable to DCWP straw-law charges, about $354,000 by the Chamber's estimate (see Finding 4, "What businesses paid"). More than four-fifths of it, about $306,000, came from charges written at a business's first observed straw-law inspection.

Under a first-time cure policy, businesses could have avoided much of that if the violations qualified and proof of correction was accepted.

6. **Few contest, and many contested charges are dismissed.** 37% of resolved DCWP straw-law charges, and 47% of Health Department straw-law cases at the city's administrative court, ended in default judgments against businesses that did not appear. At DCWP, 44 of 100 contested charges ended not guilty or dismissed. At the Health Department, 5 of the 17 contested cases that involved only straw-law charges were dismissed. The records do not say why.
7. **DCWP enforcement is rising fastest outside Manhattan.** January through July 2026 produced 1,491 DCWP straw-law charges, 36% more than the same months of 2025, with the steepest increases in Brooklyn (88%), the Bronx (46%) and Queens (31%). The second quarter of 2026 (779 charges) was DCWP's heaviest since the data begin.
8. **Manhattan accounts for more than a quarter of the total.** An estimated 2,170 of the 7,767 violations (28%) were written in Manhattan: about half at bodegas and delis and about 40% at restaurants. DCWP's charges in Manhattan and the area the records cannot separate from Staten Island held flat from 2025 to 2026. Health Department citations of Manhattan restaurants rose 49%. Midtown recorded the most violations, followed by the Lower East Side and Chinatown, Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen, and Greenwich Village and SoHo; in Harlem, East Harlem and Washington Heights, most violations came from DCWP at bodegas and delis.

The Chamber estimates that payments attributable to DCWP straw-law charges total more than $300,000 to date, about $354,000 ($96,260 identified directly in DCWP's records and the rest estimated), with an estimated $151,000 more in penalties on 1,511 guilty charges that show no payment, almost all of them default judgments. The estimate and its limits are explained in Finding 4.

The Chamber could not identify a published citywide evaluation of whether the law works. The Department of Sanitation's Revised Draft 2026 Solid Waste Management Plan reports that plastic bags in household waste fell 68% and foam products 54% between 2017 and 2023 under other bans. It reports no data on straws and does not list the straw law among the laws behind its waste-reduction program, and the Chamber could not identify any other published citywide evaluation of the law's effect on plastic waste. See The law, below.

The law



STRAWS AT THE COUNTER · THE LAW AT FIVE

The law follows a request-only model: a food service establishment may hand out a plastic straw, but only when a customer asks, and establishments with self-serve stations must post a sign saying so.

Plastic straw, stirrer and splash stick law	
Statute	Local Law 64 of 2021; NYC Admin. Code § 16-401
What it restricts	Single-use plastic stirrers and splash sticks, including compostable plastic ones, banned outright; non-compostable plastic straws only on request; compostable plastic straws only on request and for use on the premises, with used straws disposed of through commercial composting (businesses not covered by the city's commercial organics rules must keep separate, labeled bins for them); a stock of plastic straws must be kept and given free on request without questions; establishments with self-serve stations must display at each station a sign at least 2 inches by 7 inches, in 20-point type, stating "Plastic straws available upon request"
Who it covers	Any food service establishment, including bodegas, delis and supermarkets with food service
Effective	November 1, 2021; warnings rather than fines for first violations that occurred before November 1, 2022
Penalty schedule	$100 for a first violation, $200 for a second and $400 for a third or later violation of the same provision, on different days within 12 months (6 RCNY § 6-74)
Enforcing agencies	The law authorizes the Department of Sanitation, the Health Department and DCWP to enforce it; this brief covers all three

Two features of the law matter for what follows. Its signage rule creates a violation that can be charged on its own, whether or not any other provision was violated. And its penalty schedule starts at $100 per violation and rises to $200 and then $400 for repeat violations of the same provision within 12 months.

Five years in, it appears the city cannot say whether the law works. The Department of Sanitation's Revised Draft 2026 Solid Waste Management Plan, the city's first long-range waste plan in two decades, does not list Local Law 64 among the laws behind its waste-reduction program. It does report results for other single-use plastics laws: between 2017 and 2023, plastic shopping bags in household waste fell 68% and foam products fell 54% after state and city bans took effect.

Straws leave no such record. They are thrown out mostly in restaurant and store trash, which private haulers collect and for which, the plan says, the city's data are limited; the city's most recent comprehensive analysis of commercial waste dates to 2012 and relied on estimates rather than direct sampling, and Local Law 14 of 2025 does not require the next commercial waste composition study until January 31, 2032. The city publishes how many businesses it fines under the straw law, but the Chamber could not identify a published citywide evaluation of whether the law is reducing plastic. The Department of Environmental Protection has counted straws and stirrers among the debris it collects from the harbor, but the most recent such count the Chamber found predates the law.

The data

Every enforcement and payment figure in this brief comes from five public datasets on NYC Open Data, and is reproducible by anyone. The window is July 3, 2023 through July 30, 2026 for all three agencies.

Dataset	Open Data ID	What it holds and how it is used	Downloaded
DCWP Charges	5fn4-dr26	Every charge issued by DCWP's Enforcement division during an inspection, with the business, the charge, cure eligibility and outcome. 6,141 straw-law charges.	Oct 3, 2026
DCWP Payments Received	2xab-argn	Every payment DCWP received from a business, by case record and amount. Payment dates July 1, 2023 to September 24, 2026.	Oct 3, 2026
DOHMH Restaurant Inspection Results	43nn-pn8j	Health Department inspection violations at restaurants, with borough. 1,586 straw-law violations in the window.	Oct 14, 2026
OATH Hearings Division Case Status	jz4z-kudi	Summonses heard at the city's administrative court, with issuing agency, borough, outcome and penalty. Source for Sanitation's 40 summonses, Health Department hearing outcomes, and a borough for DCWP cases heard there.	Oct 14, 2026
DCWP Issued Licenses	w7w3-xahh	DCWP license records with business address and borough; used to place DCWP charges by borough.	Oct 14, 2026

How to read the numbers: a charge or violation is one alleged violation; an inspection may produce several; a case is the adjudication record for one inspection.

Four limits apply. The datasets record only inspections that produced a violation, so they cannot show how many inspections found full compliance. DCWP records payments per case, not per charge, so a dollar figure can be attributed to the straw law with certainty only where the straw charge was the sole charge in the case. The Health Department's inspection file covers only restaurants that are currently open, so it understates its earlier activity. And DCWP's records carry no borough field; the Chamber assigned one to each charge from three other sources, and for 580 charges could narrow it only to Manhattan or Staten Island. Each limit is handled explicitly in the findings and in the methodology note at the end.

Finding 1: Three agencies, one dominant



THE CORNER STORE · BODEGAS AND DELIS

Three agencies can enforce the law, but one does most of it. DCWP wrote 79% of all straw-law violations in the period, almost all of them at bodegas, delis and other food stores.

Agency	Violations	Share	Inspections	Businesses	Where
DCWP	6,141	79%	4,755	3,912	Most commonly delis and bodegas
Health Department	1,586	20%	1,362	1,310	Restaurants
Department of Sanitation	40	under 1%	n/a	n/a	Summonses; business type not recorded
All three	**7,767**	**100%**			

July 3, 2023 to July 30, 2026. Health Department figures are violations recorded at restaurant inspections; Sanitation figures are summonses heard at OATH. Business counts are not combined because the agencies use different business identifiers. The agencies also record enforcement differently, so these are recorded violations in each agency's data rather than identical enforcement actions.

The other two agencies' records show what a lighter approach looks like. The Department of Sanitation, which the law directs to conduct outreach and education about its requirements, issued 40 summonses in three years, at $100 each, and pairs the law with outreach and educational materials for businesses. The Health Department cites the law during its restaurant inspections, rarely for the sign alone (14% of its straw-law inspections, against 29% at DCWP), and 96% of the restaurants it cited were not cited again at a later inspection in the period.

The difference matters because a bodega owner cannot know which agency will walk in, or how it will treat the same missing sign.

Finding 2: Who is charged, and for what



THE REQUIRED NOTICE · PLASTIC STRAWS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

DCWP's straw-law enforcement falls overwhelmingly on bodegas and delis, the businesses in its grocery-retail license category. DCWP issued 6,141 straw-law charges in 4,755 inspections of 3,912 distinct businesses. Grocery-retail businesses, DCWP's license category for food stores that are not supermarkets or licensed restaurants, received 5,235 of those charges (85%). By name, the businesses charged are most commonly delis and bodegas, followed by mini-marts and convenience stores, and include a few hundred coffee shops, pizzerias and bagel shops that hold a grocery-retail license. Supermarkets received 536 (9%) and restaurants 368 (6%). Every other business type combined received two. Across all three agencies, grocery-retail businesses received 67% of all straw-law violations and restaurants about 25%.

The signage charge leads at DCWP. In 1,383 of the 4,755 inspections (29%), it was the only straw-law charge written; no charge for providing a plastic straw, stirrer or splash stick was recorded in those inspections. The sign is required at self-serve stations, such as a coffee or soda station, so these charges concern businesses DCWP treated as having one. In the dataset as a whole, the straw-sign charge is the 14th most frequently cited of DCWP's 669 charge types, cited in more inspections than, for example, the sale of expired over-the-counter medication.

DCWP charge	Subsection	Charges	Share
No "Plastic straws available upon request" sign, or sign too small	16-401(c)(3)	2,398	39%
Gave out a plastic straw without a request	16-401(c)(1)	1,771	29%
Provided a plastic stirrer or splash stick	16-401(b)	1,590	26%
Did not keep plastic straws on hand, or provide them free and without questions on request	16-401(c)(2)	382	6%

The Health Department's citations look different. Most concern straws actually handed out without a request; the sign accounts for about a quarter.

Health Department violation	Code	Violations	Share
Gave out a plastic straw without a request, including at a self-serve station	19-06	931	59%
No sign about plastic straw availability	19-10	409	26%
No plastic straws kept on hand for customers who ask	19-07	232	15%
Compostable straws given for use off premises, or other compostable-straw rules	19-11	8	1%
Failed to provide a plastic straw on request	19-08	6	0%

DCWP's charges rarely come alone. Three-quarters of the DCWP inspections that produced a straw charge (3,636 of 4,755) also produced charges under other laws, most often the refund-policy sign rule, price-display rules and the rule against selling expired medication. Across all 4,755 inspections, the average inspection generated 4.3 charges, of which 1.3 were straw-law charges. The public dataset does not record the purpose of an inspection, but it shows that straw-law charges are written overwhelmingly in inspections that also produce consumer-protection charges, not in stand-alone environmental inspections.

Repeat charging is more common at DCWP than at the Health Department. 741 businesses were charged by DCWP in two or more separate inspections, and 100 in three or more; the businesses charged most often are delis and gas-station convenience stores. Only 49 of the 1,310 restaurants cited by the Health Department in the period were cited at more than one inspection.

Finding 3: Outcomes, defaults, hearings and cure

A DCWP straw-law charge is, in practice, a bill. Of 6,141 charges, 5,142 have a recorded outcome; 999, mostly from 2026, are still open. Among the resolved charges, 5,007 (97.4%) ended in a guilty finding.

DCWP outcome	Charges	Guilty	Not guilty or dismissed
Pleaded guilty	3,034	3,032	0
Default judgment (business did not appear)	1,914	1,914	0
Contested hearing	100	58	44
Charges withdrawn by DCWP	94	3	15
Open	999		

DCWP's outcome fields are not mutually exclusive, so a row can sum to more than its charges. The 100 contested charges carry 103 outcome counts (58 guilty, 9 not guilty, 36 dismissed): two charges are counted both guilty and not guilty or dismissed, and one is counted both not guilty and dismissed. The table counts each charge once per column, so that row sums to 102. Likewise, two pleaded charges carry no guilty count, and three withdrawn charges carry a guilty count.

Three things stand out. First, 37% of resolved charges were decided by default. The business did not answer the summons and was found guilty without a hearing. Second, only 100 charges, under 2% of the resolved total, were actually argued before a hearing officer, and 44 of those carry a not-guilty or dismissed outcome in DCWP's records, a far higher share than across the resolved caseload as a whole. Third, DCWP itself later withdrew 94 charges; the public dataset does not say why.

The Health Department's straw-law cases follow the same pattern at the city's administrative court, OATH. Of 393 resolved cases in the period, 186 (47%) ended in a default. Among the 58 cases in which every listed charge was a straw-law charge, 17 were contested and 5 of those were dismissed.

DCWP's version of the law is also one of its least forgiving. Under the city's cure law (Local Law 153 of 2013) and DCWP's rules (6 RCNY § 6-03), a business can avoid a civil fine for certain designated first-time violations, including a missing refund-policy sign, by admitting the violation and certifying within 30 days that it has been corrected. The straw sign is not on that list. Of the 2,997 DCWP straw-law charges that carry a cure flag in the dataset, 2,992 are marked not eligible; five are marked eligible, and none was cured. Across all DCWP charge records with a cure flag in the same period, 20,270 of 124,781 (16%) were cure-eligible. In DCWP's own records, 5,871 of 6,837 flagged charges for a missing refund-policy sign (86%) are marked cure-eligible. A missing straw sign almost never is.

Finding 4: What businesses paid

When a case containing only straw-law charges is paid, it is almost always paid at $100 per straw charge. The Chamber matched every DCWP straw-law case to DCWP's payment records. 2,736 of the 4,756 cases (58%) show a net payment after voided payments are removed; the gap is driven by outcome, not by missing data. 98% of cases that ended in a guilty plea show a payment, against 27% of cases decided by default.

For the 1,120 cases in which every charge was a straw-law charge, the payment is the straw fine. 721 of those cases show a net payment, totaling $96,260. In 689 of them, the payment equals exactly $100 for each straw charge in the case; most of the rest paid $200 per charge.

Guilty straw charges in the case	Cases	Total paid
One	507	$52,940
Two	206	$41,920
Three	3	$900
None recorded (outcome fields incomplete)	5	$500
All straw-only cases with a net payment	**721**	**$96,260**

For the 3,636 cases in which straw charges were written alongside other charges, DCWP's records show one combined payment per case. The 2,015 such cases with a net payment total $800,601, which includes pricing, refund-policy and other fines and cannot be separated by charge from the public data. The Chamber therefore estimates the straw-law share. Applying the $100-per-charge rate that the straw-only cases establish to the 2,574 guilty straw-law charges in those cases gives $257,400.

	Cases	Guilty straw charges	Dollars
Straw-only cases with a net payment (actual, from DCWP's records)	721	928	$96,260
Mixed cases with a net payment (Chamber estimate at $100 per guilty straw charge)	2,015	2,574	$257,400 (est.)
Paid, actual plus estimate	**2,736**	**3,502**	**about $354,000**
Guilty straw charges in cases with no net payment (Chamber estimate, almost all defaults)	1,128	1,511	$151,100 (est.)

Because the mixed-case figure depends on how a combined payment is divided, the Chamber tested two alternatives. Dividing each mixed case's payment in proportion to its guilty straw-law

charges, out of all its guilty charges, gives a total of about $331,000; applying the average actually paid per guilty straw charge in straw-only cases ($103.73) gives about $363,000. Every method puts total payments attributable to the law above $300,000. The Chamber uses the $100-per-charge figure as its central estimate because it matches the penalty schedule and the amount paid in most straw-only cases.

By the Chamber's estimate, New York City businesses have paid more than $300,000, about $354,000, attributable to DCWP straw-law charges since July 2023, with an estimated $151,000 more in penalties on guilty charges that show no payment, overwhelmingly owed by grocery-retail businesses. Between about $49,000 and $90,000 of the payments came from Manhattan businesses. The revenue is modest for the city and concentrated on grocery-retail businesses such as delis and bodegas.

Restaurant fines cannot be totaled the same way. OATH records a penalty for each Health Department case, but most cases list at least ten charges (the dataset shows no more than ten), most of them under the Health Code rather than the straw law, and OATH's payment field is filled in for only 8 of the 397 Health Department straw-law cases in the period. Where straw-law charges were the only charges, the penalty imposed was usually $100: $6,300 in total across 58 cases. Sanitation's 40 summonses in the window carried $4,000 in penalties.

Most of DCWP's money came from a business's first inspection. For each of the 3,912 businesses charged, the Chamber identified the first date in the period on which it received a straw-law charge. Charges on those first dates account for 5,253 of the 6,141 charges (86%) and 4,416 of the 5,013 guilty findings. Charges on later dates account for the rest.

	Charges	Guilty findings	Paid (actual plus estimate)	Guilty, no payment
First straw-law inspection of the business	5,253	4,416	about $306,000	1,364
Later inspections	888	597	about $48,000	147
All	**6,141**	**5,013**	**about $354,000**	**1,511**

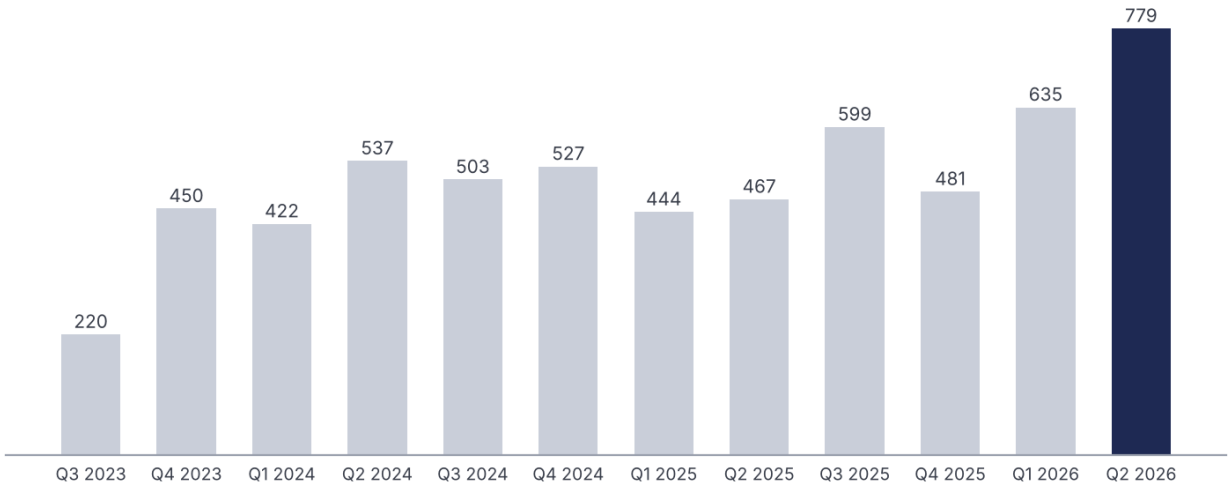
In other words, more than four-fifths of the payments attributable to DCWP straw-law charges, about $306,000 by the Chamber's central estimate and between $280,000 and $314,000 under the alternative methods, came from charges written at a business's first straw-law inspection observed in the data. 3,171 of the 3,912 businesses (81%) were not charged again at a later inspection in the period, which is the pattern a cure provision is designed for: a business that is told what is wrong, fixes it, and does not reoffend. The records cannot confirm that each of these businesses came into compliance, and those first charged in 2026 have had little time to be charged again; among businesses first charged before 2025, 73% were not charged again at a later inspection. Under a first-time cure policy like the one that applies to the refund-policy sign, businesses that corrected the violation could have avoided much of that amount, assuming the violations qualified and proof of correction was accepted.

Two cautions. The data begin in July 2023, eight months after fines became available, so a small number of first inspections in the period may be a business's second in reality. And the Chamber's proposed cure would apply to the first violation in any 12-month period, which would also reach some later inspections; the first-inspection figure counts only the first, so it is conservative in that respect.

Finding 5: DCWP enforcement is rising fastest outside Manhattan

DCWP STRAW-LAW CHARGES PER QUARTER: THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2026 WAS THE HEAVIEST SINCE MID-2023

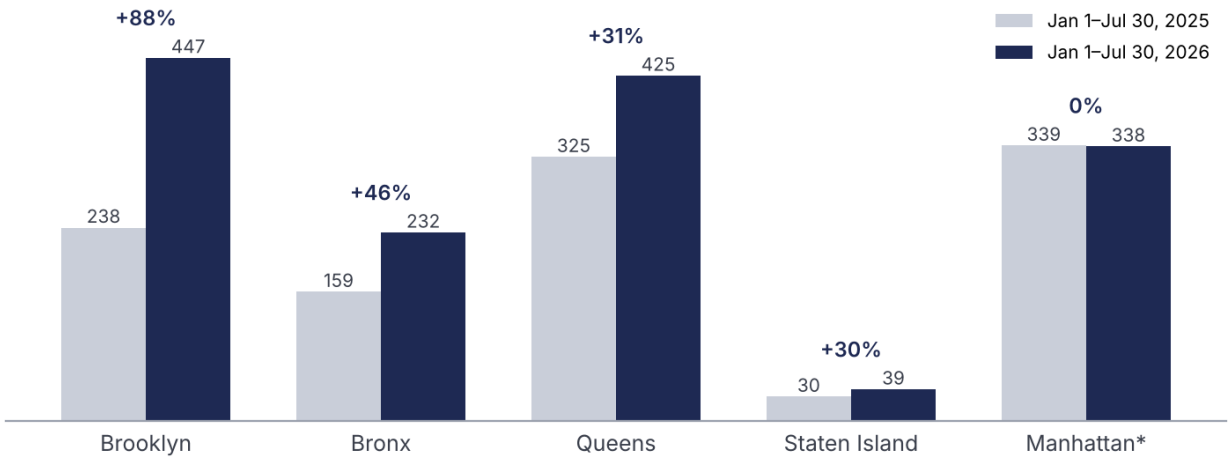
6,064 charges across 12 quarters; peak 779



DCWP Charges dataset (5fn4-dr26), downloaded October 3, 2026 · charges by quarter of violation date, Q3 2023 to Q2 2026. Q3 2026 (77 charges through July 30) is partial and omitted.

DCWP's straw-law enforcement held steady from 2024 to 2025 (1,989 and 1,991 charges) and rose sharply in 2026. After settling at roughly 420 to 540 charges a quarter through 2024 and early 2025, charges rose to 599 in the third quarter of 2025, dipped to 481 in the fourth, and then climbed to 635 and 779 in the first two quarters of 2026. The second quarter of 2026 produced 67% more straw-law charges than the same quarter of 2025, and January through July 2026 produced 1,491 charges, 36% more than the same months of 2025 (through July 30 in both years). The number of businesses charged rose with the charges: 624 businesses were charged in the second quarter of 2026, against 359 in the second quarter of 2025.

DCWP STRAW-LAW CHARGES BY BOROUGH, JANUARY 1 TO JULY 30: THE INCREASE IS CONCENTRATED OUTSIDE MANHATTAN



**Manhattan includes 580 charges the data place in Manhattan or Staten Island but cannot resolve further; an estimated four in five are in Manhattan. Staten Island shows only charges confirmed there. Fewer than 50 charges with no borough are omitted. See the methodology note.*

The increase is concentrated in Brooklyn, where charges in the first seven months of the year nearly doubled, and in the Bronx and Queens. Charges in Manhattan, together with those the records place only in Manhattan or Staten Island, held flat (339 and 338). Within that group the split shifted between confirmed Manhattan charges and unresolved ones, so the Chamber does not report a confirmed-Manhattan trend. The Health Department's restaurant citations rose only slightly citywide over the same months (358 to 364), but rose in Manhattan from 112 to 167 (49%).

Finding 6: Manhattan

An estimated 2,170 straw-law violations, or 28% of the citywide total, were written in Manhattan. The range is 1,705 to 2,285, because DCWP's records do not separate 580 charges between Manhattan and Staten Island.

Agency	Manhattan	Citywide	Manhattan share
DCWP	about 1,500 (1,039 to 1,619)	6,141	25%
Health Department	653	1,586	41%
Department of Sanitation	13	40	33%
All three	**about 2,170 (1,705 to 2,285)**	**7,767**	**28%**

Manhattan's mix differs from the rest of the city. Restaurants make up a much larger share: the Health Department recorded 41% of its citywide straw-law violations in Manhattan, most commonly in Midtown, and its Manhattan citations rose 49% in the first seven months of 2026 compared with the same months of 2025. Bodegas and delis still received about half of Manhattan's violations. Manhattan's figures echo the citywide pattern on what matters most for reform:

- Between 76% and 79% of the Manhattan businesses DCWP charged were not charged again at a later inspection, and 97% of the Manhattan restaurants the Health Department cited were cited at only one inspection.
- DCWP charged a Manhattan business for the sign alone in 27% to 28% of its straw-law inspections there.
- Manhattan businesses paid an estimated $49,000 to $90,000 attributable to DCWP straw-law charges.

WHERE IN MANHATTAN

Midtown recorded the most straw-law violations of any Manhattan neighborhood, about a fifth of those that can be placed, followed by the Lower East Side and Chinatown, Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen, and Greenwich Village and SoHo. These are also the borough's densest commercial districts, so the counts largely track how many food businesses each neighborhood has. The mix of agencies shifts uptown: in Central Harlem, East Harlem and Washington Heights, three-quarters or more of the violations came from DCWP, mostly at bodegas and delis, while below 14th Street restaurants cited by the Health Department make up close to half.

Community district	CD	Health Dept.	DCWP	Total
Midtown	5	163	168	331
Lower East Side / Chinatown	3	81	89	170
Chelsea / Hell's Kitchen	4	74	83	157
Greenwich Village / SoHo	2	77	80	157
Upper East Side	8	46	109	155
Murray Hill / Gramercy / Stuyvesant Town	6	56	86	142
Upper West Side	7	30	90	120
Lower Manhattan / Financial District	1	60	55	115
East Harlem	11	16	61	77
Washington Heights / Inwood	12	18	53	71
Central Harlem	10	8	50	58
Morningside Heights / Hamilton Heights	9	16	23	39
Placed in a community district		**645**	**947**	**1,592**

July 3, 2023 to July 30, 2026. Covers the 1,592 Manhattan violations that can be placed in a community district: 645 of 653 Health Department violations and 947 of the 1,039 DCWP charges confirmed in Manhattan. The 580 DCWP charges that may be in Manhattan or Staten Island cannot be placed and are not included, so DCWP counts are minimums. Sanitation's 13 Manhattan summonses are omitted. Neighborhood names are approximate labels for each community district.

Recommendations

The Chamber supports the goal of the law. Less single-use plastic is good for the city and often good for a business's costs. The problem is not the goal. It is that one agency has turned the law into a routine $100 charge against bodegas, most often for a missing sign, with no path to cure, while Sanitation, the agency the law directs to educate businesses, treats it as a matter of education. The law's fifth anniversary is the right moment to fix how it is enforced and to start measuring what it achieves. Each recommendation below is tied to a finding above.

FOR THE CITY COUNCIL

1. **Make first-time straw-law violations cure-eligible.** Amend Admin. Code § 16-401 so that a business's first violation within a 12-month period may be cured by certifying correction, with no fine, as the city already allows for the refund-policy sign and other designated posting rules. The 12-month reset would be new; existing cure provisions refer to a first-time violation. The cure should not extend to refusing a plastic straw to a customer who asks for one, which protects people with disabilities who need them. Finding 3 shows that only five of 2,997 flagged DCWP straw-law charges were cure-eligible, and Finding 4 shows that more than four-fifths of the payments attributable to the law came from a business's first inspection.
2. **End the stand-alone fine for the straw sign.** Amend § 16-401(c)(3) so that a missing "Plastic straws available upon request" sign draws a warning rather than a fine unless plastic was also provided without a request, and consider allowing a single notice where customers order or pay in place of one at each self-serve station. Finding 2 shows that 1,383 DCWP inspections charged a business solely for the sign, with no other straw-law violation charged.
3. **Set one education-first approach for all three agencies.** Require the three enforcing agencies to adopt a joint enforcement protocol, developed with the Department of Sanitation, which the law already charges with outreach and education: a warning and guidance for a first violation, and penalties for repeated ones. Finding 1 shows that a business today cannot know which agency will inspect it or how the same missing sign will be treated.
4. **Require an annual public report on straw-law enforcement.** Each enforcing agency should report each year, by borough and by business type, the number of charges, outcomes, penalties imposed and penalties collected under § 16-401. Today the public can reconstruct these figures only by matching five datasets by hand, as this brief had to. The Council should also ask the Department of Sanitation to count straws, stirrers and splash sticks as their own category in the commercial waste study required by Local Law 14 of 2025, so the city can tell whether the law is reducing plastic waste. The Department of Environmental Protection, whose floatables monitoring program has counted straws and stirrers among harbor debris, should publish those counts from before and after the law took effect, so the city can see whether fewer are reaching its waterways.

FOR DCWP

5. **Treat a first-time signage violation as a notice, not a summons.** Finding 2 shows that three-quarters of DCWP inspections producing a straw-law charge also produce charges under other laws, most often pricing and refund-policy rules. Where an inspection finds only a missing straw sign at a business not previously charged, DCWP should issue a notice and a free compliant sign rather than a monetary penalty.
6. **Publish penalty data per charge, with a borough field.** The Payments Received dataset records one lump sum per case, and neither DCWP dataset records a borough. Adding the charge-level penalty and a borough field would let the public see what each law actually costs and where. The Chamber had to estimate what DCWP could simply publish.
7. **Make it easier to cure and to answer a summons.** Thirty-seven percent of resolved DCWP straw charges, and 47% of the Health Department's straw-law cases at OATH, were decided by default. The Chamber separately supports an online system at OATH for submitting proof that a violation has been corrected; the same system should let a business answer a straw-law summons without taking a day off to appear.

FOR ALL THREE AGENCIES

8. **Fund outreach before enforcement.** Compliant signs, stirrer and straw alternatives, and clear guidance in the languages spoken behind Manhattan's counters cost far less than 7,767 violations. Business owners who need help can reach the Business Help Desk at bizhelp.nyc.

Methodology and data notes

Identifying straw-law violations. A DCWP charge was counted as a straw-law charge if its description cites NYC Admin. Code § 16-401. The law has five separately chargeable provisions; four appear in DCWP's data, (b), (c)(1), (c)(2) and (c)(3), and no DCWP charge cites subsection (d), which governs compostable plastic straws. Health Department violations were identified by the straw-law violation codes 19-06, 19-07, 19-08, 19-10 and 19-11; a sanitary code for unwrapped drinking straws (10H) was excluded because it is not part of the straw law. OATH cases were counted where any charge cites § 16-401, limited to the Health Department and the Department of Sanitation and to violation dates in the window. Charge-type rankings count the inspections in which each charge type was cited; weighted by DCWP's Charge Count field, which can exceed one for a single citation, the straw-sign charge ranks 22nd. Every DCWP straw-law row carries a charge count of one, so rows and charges are equal (6,141).

Inspections and cases. A DCWP inspection is a distinct Inspection Number (4,755 with a straw-law charge); a case is a distinct Record ID (4,756). A "straw-only" case is one in which every charge in the case cites § 16-401 (1,120 cases). A "mixed" case contains at least one other charge (3,636). A Health Department inspection is a distinct restaurant and inspection date (1,362). Sign-only shares count inspections in which the sign was the only straw-law violation recorded.

Assigning a borough to DCWP charges. DCWP's datasets carry no borough field. The Chamber assigned one in this order: the violation borough of the same case at OATH, matched on the notice-of-hearing number (2,397 charges); the address borough in DCWP's license records, matched on Business Unique ID (applied where OATH had none); the borough already assigned to another charge of the same business; and finally the borough code in the notice-of-hearing number. Wherever two sources overlapped, they agreed in all but a handful of cases. The hearing-number code distinguishes Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx, but uses one letter for both Manhattan and Staten Island, so 580 charges at businesses with no other borough record could be placed only in Manhattan or Staten Island. Among charges with that letter whose borough was confirmed, 80.5% were in Manhattan; the Chamber's Manhattan estimate applies that share to the 580 (about 467 charges), and every Manhattan figure is also given as a range from confirmed-only to all 580. Fewer than 50 charges could not be placed, including those with a fifth hearing-number code (G) used across several boroughs and cases OATH records outside New York City. Manhattan rates (sign-only, charged once) are reported for the confirmed set and for the confirmed set plus the 580, which bound them; confirmed charges over-represent cases heard at OATH, so rates that depend on outcome, such as defaults, are not reported by borough.

Community districts. Health Department violations carry a community district in the source file. A DCWP charge confirmed in Manhattan was placed using the community district in the business's DCWP license record, or otherwise the ZIP code of its OATH case, mapped to the community district most common for that ZIP code in the license and restaurant files (ZIP codes and districts do not line up exactly, so a small number of charges near district lines may be misplaced). 947 of 1,039 confirmed Manhattan DCWP charges could be placed.

Business-category rates and business types. Among DCWP inspections that produced any charge, 39% of grocery-retail inspections, 45% of restaurant inspections and 17% of supermarket inspections included a straw-law charge. The dataset does not record inspections with no charges, so these are not compliance rates. The description of grocery-retail businesses as most commonly delis and bodegas is based on business and trade names: of 3,302 grocery-retail businesses charged, about 1,210 have "deli" in the name, roughly 320 to 370 are mini-marts or markets, roughly 240 to 290 are coffee shops, cafes, pizzerias, bagel, juice or donut shops (depending on the name patterns used), about 210 more have "grocery" but not "deli" in the name, and

about 130 are convenience stores; many bodegas are incorporated under names such as "Food Corp," so the deli-and-bodega share is understated. Combined business-type shares treat all Health Department violations as restaurant violations; Sanitation summonses do not record business type and are excluded from those shares.

Outcomes. For DCWP, Outcome, Guilty, Not Guilty and Dismissed are DCWP's own fields. "Resolved" means any non-blank outcome (5,142). The guilty rate of 97.4% is guilty findings among resolved charges (5,007) divided by resolved charges. Six further charges carry a guilty count of 1 but a blank Outcome field; they are counted among the 999 open charges and in the 5,013 guilty total used for the dollar estimates. For the Health Department, outcomes are OATH's Hearing Result field for each case; "default" includes OATH's "Default/No Appearance" result, and "contested" means a case sustained or dismissed after a hearing. OATH figures for the Health Department cover cases with violation dates in the same July 3, 2023 to July 30, 2026 window (397 cases).

Cure. Cure Eligible is DCWP's field indicating whether a charge is eligible for cure or a zero-dollar fine. It is blank for 3,144 straw-law charges; percentages use only flagged charges. Because every straw-law record carries a charge count of one, the citywide comparison counts records: 20,270 of 124,781 flagged DCWP charge records (16%) were cure-eligible. Weighted by Charge Count, the share is 5% (30,339 of 578,765).

Payment matching. DCWP payments were matched to charges on Record ID after removing leading zeros, using only rows with Record Type dcwp_adjudication. Payment Amount was summed per case, which nets out the 392 voided payment entries on straw-law cases; a case counts as paid only if its net payment is above zero (2,736 cases). Some fees show more than one positive payment entry, consistent with installment payments; in 35 cases, all of them mixed cases, net payments exceed the fees owed by a combined $7,725. No straw-only case shows a payment above its fee, so the $96,260 is unaffected. The central estimate is actual straw-only payments ($96,260 across 721 cases) plus 2,574 guilty straw-law charges in paid mixed cases multiplied by $100 ($257,400), for about $354,000. The $100 multiplier is the rate observed in 689 of the 721 paid straw-only cases, where the payment equals exactly $100 per straw charge in the case. The alternative estimates divide each mixed case's net payment by its share of guilty charges (about $331,000 in total) or apply the average paid per guilty straw charge in straw-only cases, $103.73 (about $363,000). Unpaid amounts apply the $100 rate to the 1,511 guilty straw-law charges in cases with no net payment ($151,100); some mid-2026 charges may simply not have been paid by September 24, 2026, so the unpaid estimate may run slightly high. Manhattan dollar figures apply the same methods to confirmed Manhattan charges (about $49,000) and to those plus the 580 unresolved charges (about $88,000 to $90,000).

First-inspection charges. For each DCWP Business Unique ID, the earliest violation date with a straw-law charge in the period was taken as that business's first inspection; all straw-law charges written on that date are first-inspection charges (5,253), and charges from later dates are repeat charges (888). Repeat-charging counts (741 businesses charged at two or more inspections; 81% not charged again at a later inspection) count distinct inspections; 87 businesses had two inspections on the same date, so counting by date gives 654 businesses with a later charge. "First" means first observed in the data, not first offense under the rule's 12-month test. Health Department repeat figures count distinct inspection dates per restaurant.

Health Department coverage. The restaurant inspection file includes only restaurants that are active at the time of download and drops older inspections over time, so it understates earlier years and the business count; it is used here for the period's totals, borough and type, and its trend is reported for 2025 and 2026 only. OATH's payment field is filled in for only 8 of 397 Health Department straw-law cases in the window, so no Health Department payment total is reported.

What this brief does not show. Compliance rates, warnings issued without a charge, the purpose of any inspection, and Health Department or Sanitation enforcement outside restaurants and OATH summonses.

SOURCES

DCWP Charges and DCWP Payments Received, NYC Open Data, downloaded October 3, 2026 · DOHMH Restaurant Inspection Results, OATH Hearings Division Case Status and DCWP Issued Licenses, NYC Open Data, downloaded October 14, 2026 · DCWP Notice of Adoption, Single-Use Beverage Plastics Penalty Schedule (6 RCNY § 6-74), implementing Local Law 64 of 2021 · NYC Department of Sanitation, Revised Draft 2026 Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP26), March 2026, Chapters 2, 5 and 7 · NYC Department of Sanitation, "Plastic Straws, Splash Sticks, and Stirrers" business guidance · NYC Department of Environmental Protection, Floatables Monitoring Program Progress Report, March 2018

MANHATTAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

About the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce. The Manhattan Chamber of Commerce represents the borough's roughly 125,000 businesses through a 501(c)(6) Chamber, a 501(c)(3) Foundation and a Community Benefit Fund. This brief continues the Chamber's Enforcement Uncovered series, which uses the city's own public records to examine how business regulation is applied in practice. Business owners seeking help with compliance or an enforcement matter can contact the Business Help Desk at bizhelp.nyc.

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