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To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to ask that you immediately stop the contract for Rockaway's boardwalk concessions from being awarded to the Rockaway Beach Bazaar, LLC.

The contract should be awarded to the existing concessions, which have been run by Rockaway Beach Club, LLC (now Rockaway Board Club, LLC). These are the businesses and people who have been working on building up our local economy for the past 10 years. If you award the contract to Rockaway Bazaar LLC, you will be closing MANY beloved local businesses which have become a huge part of our community and economy.

The outpouring of support that was heard at the public hearing and in emails to NYCParks was absolutely a reflection of how important it is for Rockaway and NYC to keep the current concessions.

The concessions run by Rockaway Beach Club, LLC represent a coalition of business owners who work well together and provide a diverse food experience. The concessions they operate, Rippers, Caracas, Low Tide, and more, are all staffed and owned by community members who have contributed significantly to the revitalization of Rockaway. They employ local youth. Rockaway Beach Club provides great opportunities to learn valuable job skills to these local youth who live in such a geographically remote and underprivileged community. They pay fair wages and support upward mobility, not just entry level jobs. Rockaway Beach Club LLC (now Rockaway Board Club, LLC) has retained employees and vendors that are local and return year after year. These businesses are beloved, with a great track record. They have attracted more businesses and people to invest in and enjoy spending time in Rockaway. They are great for the local economy. They provide a great experience to working class new york beach goers and charge fair prices for their fresh food and beverages.

We need you to support our local minority business owners. This is a criteria for many city contracts, but not the NYC parks RFP. Why? Maribel Araujo, is one of the owners of the Rockaway Beach Club and she is a Venezuelan immigrant who has overcome great challenges and proven to be a great operator and successful business owner. It has been an unimaginably difficult year for the Rockaways, and we've had many hard years. Through Sandy, Beach shut downs, and COVID, Maribel and the Rockaway Beach Club (now Rockaway Board Club, LLC) have been tirelessly working to provide jobs and build a prosperous sustainable business model

which is no small feat considering the location and the seasonality. NYC vows to support minority owned businesses, and invest in local businesses in our underserved communities– but now is forcing out these same businesses they purport to help.

It doesn't make sense for NYC to award the contract to Rockaway Bazaar LLC, they do not have a proven track record. In fact, the Rockaway Bazaar LLC operated as Brooklyn Bazaar for a few years opening twice and closing twice– both times demonstrating reckless business acumen and leaving a trail of unhappy relationships with landlords, customers, sublettees, and vendors. This was well documented in the press. For the past five years, Rockaway Beach Bazaar has operated at Riis park under a federal parks contract, where they are able to charge exorbitant prices for liquor beverages and then sublet all of the food to a revolving door of subleasees. Liquor is not permitted on the Rockaway boardwalk. The business model they have briefly used will not work on the Rockaway Boardwalk. We have heard they are infamously profit-first, community-second. Tales of their unfair operations travel widely in Brooklyn where they tried and failed to operate, their reputation is fraught with stories of employee mistreatment, environmental disregard, and mismanaged finances. Their proposal seems unrealistic and like they intend to just profit off of the labor of subleases, which is a step in the wrong direction. It would represent a monopoly of the entire Rockaway peninsula if they get the federal contract at Riis and then the NYC parks contract for the Rockaway Boardwalk. Why should this happen when we have capable awesome small businesses already in place providing diverse experiences and having a positive local economic impact.

Please deny the contract to Rockaway Beach Bazaar and award it to Rockaway Board Club, LLC.

Signed,
Concerned Constituent