



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **OATH FINALIZES EXPANSION OF HEALTH TRIBUNAL TO ALL FIVE BOROUGHES**

*OATH Has Significantly Expanded Access to Justice by Transforming the Health Tribunal From One Manhattan-Based Hearing Location into a Tribunal With Fully-Functioning Hearing Offices in All Five Boroughs.*

*The New Brooklyn Office Will Make it Easier for Brooklyn Restaurant-Owners to Contest NYC Health Department Violations In-Person Because They Will No Longer Have to Travel To Manhattan.*

On Friday, December 20, 2013 the City of New York's Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH) will open a state-of-the-art Health Tribunal hearing office in Brooklyn. The Brooklyn hearing location is the fourth Health Tribunal hearing office that OATH has opened in the outer boroughs since taking over the operations of the Tribunal from the City's Health Department in 2011. Restaurant-owners in the outer boroughs no longer have to travel to Manhattan if they want to contest violations that are issued to them by the Health Department at an in-person hearing.

"This administration has made it a priority to create user-friendly and accessible hearing office locations. OATH has helped New Yorkers by opening more locations in our outer boroughs that are closer to where people live and work," said Carol Robles-Roman, Deputy Mayor for Legal Affairs.

In 2011, OATH took over the management of the Health Tribunal from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). At the time, the Health Tribunal had one hearing office, in lower Manhattan, where all restaurant cases were scheduled for hearings. In 2011, OATH launched Hearings-by-Phone and in 2012 it launched One-Click (Online) Hearings. These programs make it possible for restaurant-owners to contest alleged violations at their own convenience rather than having to come to the Tribunal in-person to fight Health Department charges.

OATH has also worked diligently on behalf of restaurant-owners who prefer to come to the Tribunal in-person to contest violations they receive from the Health Department. OATH opened the first-ever hearing office outside Manhattan in 2011 on Staten Island, and in 2012 it opened hearing office locations in the Bronx and Queens. The new Brooklyn hearing office finalizes the expansion of the Health Tribunal to all five boroughs.

"As the City's central independent administrative court, OATH's top priority is to make it as easy as possible for those who have been summoned to one our tribunals to have their day in court," said OATH Commissioner and Chief Judge, Suzanne Beddoe.

The new Brooklyn office will be the Health Tribunal's largest hearing office, second only to Manhattan. The office is equipped with video-conferencing technology that will further expand "Virtual Hearings" an OATH program that enables the Health Department's inspectors to testify remotely during scheduled hearings at any of the five OATH Health Tribunal offices throughout the city. Virtual Hearings has significantly reduced the number of adjournments at the Health Tribunal and as a result, restaurant-owners are not inconvenienced by having to return to the tribunal to have their hearing on another day.

The OATH Health Tribunal in Brooklyn will hold hearings on all food safety and sanitary violations issued to restaurants located in that borough as well as other types of Health Department-issued violations. The new office will be open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The hearing office is located at 9 Bond Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

*About the NYC Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH)*

OATH is the largest municipal administrative court in the nation, conducting nearly 400,000 hearings annually. OATH is comprised of four independent and separate administrative tribunals which hold hearings on a wide-variety of cases:

- The Environmental Control Board (ECB) holds approximately 200,000 hearings annually on quality of life and public safety charges that are filed by 13 different City enforcement agencies including the Buildings Department, Fire Department, Sanitation Department and Department of Environmental Protection, among others.

- The OATH Health Tribunal holds hearings on alleged violations of the City Health Code and other charges brought by the City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). The majority of the hearings involve restaurants and other food service establishments.

- The OATH Taxi & Limousine Tribunal holds hearings on potential violations of TLC's rules and regulations, including cases brought against drivers by TLC, NYPD, Port Authority of NY and charges resulting from customer complaints.

- The OATH Tribunal adjudicates a diverse range of matters including civil service disciplinary cases, human rights and discrimination cases, car seizure cases, license revocation cases and complex contractual disputes.