

Communication from Public

Name: California Restaurant Association
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Council File No: 13-1493-S17
Comments for Public Posting: Attached

January 21, 2025

Public Works Committee
Los Angeles City Council
200 N Spring Street,
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Sidewalk Vending Program/ Enforcement- (CF: 13-1493-S17)

Dear Chair Hernandez and members of the Public Works Committee,

I am writing today to express our concern and offer our comments on the report submitted by the Bureau of Street Services (BSS). The California Restaurant Association (CRA) represents over 22,000 neighborhood eating establishments throughout the state and we work continuously to try and shape public policy in ways that support the restaurant community. Our Los Angeles Chapter is a very robust and active collection of restaurants who know and accept that street vending is a part of the local fabric of the community and we, as the restaurant community, can coexist. The CRA has a long history of working with both the state and local municipalities to encourage entrepreneurship, while promoting the safe vending of food.

Food safety has always been our top priority, as we brick-and-mortar restaurants are held to very strict rules and standards for ensuring the safe sale and consumption of food to the public. These same driving forces- public health and safety- should be at the core of our City's vending ordinance. However, we are concerned that this proposal will further weaken current enforcement mechanisms to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

Since the Sidewalk and Park Vending Program was established in 2018 the City has continued to emphasize outreach and education over enforcement to ensure vendors have time to understand the City's rules and regulations and attain all of the necessary permits required. The City has continuously collaborated with various community groups to ensure proper educational materials and technical assistance reach the City's estimated 50,000 vendors in this effort.

This Council allocated \$6 million in COVID-19 relief funds to help vendors finance the purchase of equipment and permits required by City and County vending rules (C.F. 13- 1493-S11). Reduced permit fees and extended permit lifetimes during the pandemic (C.F. 13- 1493-S10) and continued those reduced annual fees of \$291 (C.F. 13-1493-S13). This last year, Council reduced the annual permit fee cost from \$541 to \$27.51 from an already reduced cost so that vendors would be incentivized to obtain their permit (C.F. 13-1493-S15). The finalized Sidewalk Vending Cart Program provides vendors with financing for the purchase of code-compliant food carts needed to obtain a food vending permit from the County and additional funds for continued outreach, education, and technical assistance (C.F. 13-1493-S18). These Council actions highlight the City's extensive efforts for outreach and education in the benefit of vendors for the last seven years.

The City can no longer move forward with an education first approach. The report submitted by the Bureau of Street Services continues to highlight the need for enforcement. Only 687 vendors have active permits as of September 2024. Only 53 food vendors have an active permit out of the City's estimated

50,000 vendors. An education first approach has not been effective. The City must give guidance to BSS Investigation and Enforcement Division (IED) to resume enforcement which they have not done since the establishment of a moratorium on the enforcement of vending without a valid permit in 2021 (CF: 20-0147-S27).

Removing BSS IED's ability to mail citations regarding violations of sidewalk vending rules further weakens investigator's ability to enforce the City's vending rules when over 98% of estimated vendors are vending without a permit. This continues to put local public health and safety at risk as food vending operations often lack the necessary handwashing compartments, food temperature controls, plumbing and the cooking of large quantities of potentially hazardous foods. In addition, unregulated open fire has been an alarming trend for years and continues to threaten public safety and should not continue in the City.

For these reasons we respectfully urge that you do not remove BSS IED's ability to mail citations and remove the education first approach that the City has maintained for the last seven years before issuing citations and consider prioritizing enforcement to protect the health, safety, and welfare of customers and the community. We very much appreciate the City's continued efforts to do extensive outreach to educate vendors and the public on sidewalk vending rules and appreciate the opportunity to provide additional comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jackie Romero". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jackie" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Romero".

Jackie Romero
Director of Local Government Affairs
California Restaurant Association

CC: Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez
Councilmember Imelda Padilla
Councilmember Heather Hutt