

## Communication from Public

**Name:** LA Street Vendor Campaign  
**Date Submitted:** 03/23/2020 10:34 AM  
**Council File No:** 20-0147-s27  
**Comments for Public Posting:** Please see attached LA Street Vendor Campaign's response regarding the Sidewalk Vending Economy in the Coronavirus Pandemic.

March 23, 2020

Honorable Members of the City Council  
Los Angeles City Hall  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Re: LA City's Support of the Sidewalk Vending Economy in the Coronavirus Pandemic**

Dear Honorable Council Members:

The Los Angeles Street Vendor Campaign (LASVC) writes to share concerns about the impact of the COVID-19 (also known as the coronavirus) on the thousands of micro-entrepreneurs working throughout the City of Los Angeles as sidewalk vendors. Like all small businesses across the City, sidewalk vendors have seen a precipitous drop in sales. Further, like thousands of low-income residents across the City, they face disastrous consequences if they see a significant loss of income over the following weeks. Of the tens of thousands of vendors across the City, approximately 80% are women, and the majority are people of color, immigrants, seniors and low-income. Supporting vendors means protecting the means by which many immigrant women of color survive in our community. They depend on this business in order to pay rent and keep their families and themselves afloat. The City of LA must support these small business owners in the same way they are supporting brick and mortar small businesses. This will promote the health, safety, and welfare of all of its residents, instead of just select ones.

The LASVC is a citywide coalition of community-based organizations, labor unions, and thousands of street vendors who have been working for years to advance and protect the rights of low-income vendors. Our coalition, and the worker-led movement to legalize street vending in California, has always been led by those most impacted: low-income vendors. This health crisis will present yet another barrier to low-income vendors as they fight to support themselves and their families in this economically detrimental moment. We look to the City Council to stand up for low-income residents and business owners in this City as we face this public health crisis together.

**The City should support and develop a cash assistance fund for sidewalk vendors.**

- a. Without immediate cash assistance, thousands of low-income LA families will face dire consequences.

With the necessary "Safer-at-Home" directive, this crisis is threatening the wellbeing of vendors by eliminating income for thousands of small businesses. Due to the loss of income, these workers become vulnerable to a myriad of economic and health outcomes, including but not limited to: food insecurity, loss of housing, overcrowding in housing situations, loss of access to neighborhood resources such as community health clinics, and homelessness. Although there is a moratorium on both evictions and utilities due to non-payment, that does not entirely ease the burden of these costs because the

back-payment will be due once the moratoriums are lifted. And many other costs, like food, medicine, and clothing remain.

Given these risks, the City must immediately set up a low-barrier cash assistance program to assist sidewalk vendors for the duration of the emergency. As we see decreases in sales for all businesses in the City, both sidewalk vending and brick and mortar businesses, these owners will be deeply impacted by this pandemic. Further, vendors are often undocumented, meaning any federal assistance programs that are established will not reach these hard-working business owners. For this reason, the City must support these vendors in developing a cash assistance fund for sidewalk vendors.

- b. Cash assistance programs are common during normal economic times and are essential in this time of economic crisis to shore up our most vulnerable populations.

Direct cash assistance programs are not unprecedented, even in times of normal economic activity. There are several programs in California that provide direct cash assistance to qualifying individuals. For example, California funds the Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI), which is administered locally by LA County, and provides direct cash assistance to qualifying non-citizens who are elderly or disabled.<sup>1</sup> The cities of Stockton<sup>2</sup> and Santa Monica<sup>3</sup> have also launched basic income programs over the past several years to assist low-income residents.

Over the past several weeks, other jurisdictions have launched direct cash assistance programs in the face of this pandemic. In New Orleans, a public-private partnership is providing direct cash assistance to gig workers who are facing loss of income due to the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> In Boston, the city has launched a direct cash assistance fund to artists impacted by the pandemic.<sup>5</sup>

LASVC has launched a fund to provide cash assistance to vendors with initial funding from the United Way Pandemic Relief Fund. It will not be nearly enough to support the vendor community in Los Angeles. The City must directly establish a fund, or form a private-public partnership to establish and seed a fund to assist vendors in dire need.

### **The City should refund and waive all fees paid for the Sidewalk and Park Vending Permit and the Business Tax Registration Certificate.**

We also request that the City provide an immediate refund of all permit fees paid, including the annual vending permit fee, and that the City suspend any and all fees relate to the renewal of the Business Tax Registration Certificate (BTRC). Due to this pandemic, the vendors who have purchased a permit must be

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/capi>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.stocktondemonstration.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Low-Income Senior Renters can Register for POD Pilot Program Starting November 2014," City of Santa Monica (Oct. 29, 2019), *available at* <https://www.santamonica.gov/press/2019/10/29/low-income-senior-renters-can-register-for-preserving-our-diversity-pilot-program-starting-november-4>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nolaba.org/relief-fund/>.

<sup>5</sup>

<https://cityofbostonartsandculture.submittable.com/submit/af2153eb-2d87-4e9d-9ebc-5861eb135999/boston-artist-relief-fund>.

refunded their money because they are not able to perform their work. Similarly, any fees associated with the BTRC, including the filing fee for those filing after the March 3 deadline, must be waived in order to minimize the burden of this certificate, and ensure that any money these families have goes towards basic essentials.

**Vending permits should be free and the enforcement grace period prolonged after there is no longer a pandemic.**

Because vending is a lifeline for many of these micro-entrepreneurs and this moment is proving to be economically detrimental to small and micro enterprises, vending permits for the remainder of the year should be free. This money will be better spent on business capital and supplies needed to revive their businesses. Further, this unexpected interruption in the rollout of the vending permit program will mean that outreach and education will be more important than ever as vendors revive their businesses post pandemic. The enforcement grace period should be extended for the remainder of the year and there should be a renewed emphasis on outreach and education.

**Ensure vendors are included in all small business relief programs created by City Council in response to COVID-19**

The City has a responsibility to protect its most vulnerable in this time of crisis. We ask the City to work creatively and compassionately in this time of need and to support the vendor community in weathering this storm. At last week's City Council meeting (March 17, 2020), the City Council approved several motions requesting financial relief for small businesses, including direct cash assistance to cover payroll and rent payments.<sup>6</sup> The City Council also approved motions specific to the restaurant industry, including a request to explore the possibility of a one year tax holiday on gross receipts.<sup>7</sup>

During the same Council meeting, there was a directive to StreetsLA and LAPD to end the grace period for enforcement of sidewalk vendors - specifically food ones - across the City. While the City took away this lifeline for many women, seniors, and immigrants, it did not include any financial breaks or support for vendors like it has for many brick and mortar businesses. The City Council should ensure that all small business relief programs include these micro-entrepreneurs.

This is an integral moment in determining the success of these vendors. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to the leadership that Los Angeles will show for this vulnerable population.

Sincerely,

Los Angeles Street Vendor Campaign

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<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Council File 20-0147-s27, Motions 72-R, 72-CC , available at <https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=20-0147-s27>.

<sup>7</sup> See Council File 20-0147-s27, 72-QQ , available at <https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=20-0147-s27>.