

Communication from Public

Name: Los Angeles Poverty Departement

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Council File No: 20-0380-S1

Comments for Public Posting: Los Angeles Poverty Department wants to share our concerns regarding an expedited permitting process proposed by the City of Los Angeles. The Restaurant Beverage Program (Council File #17-0981) would “streamline” alcohol permitting through “standardization”. Such a broad approach to the issuance of alcohol permits introduces a litany of issues related to sensitive uses and developing communities. This approach ignores the notion that varying neighborhoods in Los Angeles have needs that vastly differ from locale to locale, and many neighborhoods have been saturated with an over-concentration of alcohol outlets for a number of years. We challenge the belief that restaurants selling alcohol are benign uses, as alcohol availability and consumption contribute to myriad community problems including crime, violence/domestic violence, and DUI’s. High alcohol outlet concentrations also exacerbate addiction and threaten those recovering from addiction. Skid Row is surrounded by hundreds of alcohol uses, and community members have been advocating that alcohol prohibitions be included in the Downtown Los Angeles Community Plan (DTLA 2040), to ensure added protections for our recovery community. Our experience has also taught us that restaurants frequently usher in gentrification, bringing uses that do not serve the needs of long-time community members. The Restaurant Beverage Program would bar the ability of community members and stakeholders to voice the above-mentioned concerns, take measures to ensure that uses are responsive to community needs, and/or to oppose proposed uses. There are a standard set of operational conditions proposed to mitigate potential problems, but they cannot replace the power of community input and vigilance. Current changes to CA State guidelines for selling alcohol have created additional concerns, as all on-site alcohol uses (such as restaurants) can now sell off-site (to go). This policy changes the spirit of the proposed City program, which was envisioned for select sit-down family restaurants, and is an additional reason to challenge it. We will keep you posted regarding additional advocacy opportunities related to this matter.