

Communication from Public

Name: Mary M. Lee

Date Submitted: 11/19/2020 01:22 PM

Council File No: 17-0981

Comments for Public Posting: I have a long track record of working with community- based groups across Los Angeles contending with the consequences of living with an excessive number of alcohol outlets in their neighborhoods. I also have substantial experience working with residents and government agencies on policy measures that aim to make access to healthy, affordable, high quality food a reality in neighborhoods that have been and continue to be marginalized – typically low income areas and communities of color. But I am submitting these comments as an individual and in my capacity as a life-long resident of Los Angeles, and for the past 30 years a homeowner in the Leimert Park area of South Los Angeles. I strongly oppose passage of this measure as it seeks to resolve a problem that does not exist, but in the process creates new problems for residents of neighborhoods already unfairly burdened by rampant sale of alcohol. The alleged need to immediately augment alcohol sales would not be beneficial to residents living near these businesses or to the city. These businesses create very few jobs, and the vast majority of jobs they do create pay low wages, do not provide health insurance or other benefits and are unlikely to act as career ladders. Rather than contributing to the city's tax base, increasing alcohol availability places excessive demands on public services that local taxpayers must cover – namely the cost of increased sanitation, police, ambulance/paramedic services, etc. Numerous studies have documented that neighborhoods which are overrun with alcohol outlets also experience higher rates of domestic violence, DUI cases and vehicle crashes, public urination and noise violations, as well as staggering rates of addiction, and resulting physical and mental health challenges. Ultimately, the public will experience the harm that results from the proliferation of alcohol sales, and taxpayers will have to foot the bill. Only the business operator will profit – and even then, the odds of long- term profit are uncertain at best. The COVID 19 crisis has greatly exacerbated these threats, as rates of alcohol abuse are rising sharply, as are instances of depression and related mental health problems. Again, the areas hardest hit by these hazards are the neighborhoods that are home to people of color and low -income residents. In the midst of the pandemic, the city has an obligation to address the greatest needs of city residents. Clearly, there is no

urgent need to increase the supply of alcohol or to make it even more accessible than it already is. There are currently hundreds of existing outlets to choose from across the city – restaurants, bars, liquor stores, grocery stores, warehouse stores, corner stores, even gas stations and nail salons. Home delivery of alcohol is permitted, and regulations are being relaxed to allow for the sale of individual alcoholic beverages “to go” on a takeout basis. But while consumers have a multitude of options available to obtain alcohol, the same cannot be said when it comes to accessing adequate and affordable food. This is particularly true for residents of low-income communities of color. Rather than rushing to expedite a measure to ease the sale of alcohol, the city must spend its time and funds on immediately expanding access to food. Unemployment is escalating rapidly; an eviction crisis is looming; and homelessness has reached epic levels. People experiencing these catastrophes need food – not alcohol. I urge you to reject this measure and to redirect city resources to addressing the urgent and essential need for increased access to food. Sincerely, Mary M. Lee, Esq.

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Mary M. Lee

November 19, 2020

Honorable Members
Planning and Land Use Management Committee

RE: Case No. CPC-2018-4660-CA/ November 19, 2020 Agenda Item No. 12 17-0981

I have a long track record of working with community- based groups across Los Angeles contending with the consequences of living with an excessive number of alcohol outlets in their neighborhoods. I also have substantial experience working with residents and government agencies on policy measures that aim to make access to healthy, affordable, high quality food a reality in neighborhoods that have been and continue to be marginalized – typically low income areas and communities of color. But I am submitting these comments as an individual and in my capacity as a life-long resident of Los Angeles, and for the past 30 years a homeowner in the Leimert Park area of South Los Angeles.

I strongly oppose passage of this measure as it seeks to resolve a problem that does not exist, but in the process creates new problems for residents of neighborhoods already unfairly burdened by rampant sale of alcohol. The alleged need to immediately augment alcohol sales would not be beneficial to residents living near these businesses or to the city. These businesses create very few jobs, and the vast majority of jobs they do create pay low wages, do not provide health insurance or other benefits and are unlikely to act as career ladders. Rather than contributing to the city's tax base, increasing alcohol availability places excessive demands on public services that local taxpayers must cover – namely the cost of increased sanitation, police, ambulance/paramedic services, etc. Numerous studies have documented that neighborhoods which are overrun with alcohol outlets also experience higher rates of domestic violence, DUI cases and vehicle crashes, public urination and noise violations, as well as staggering rates of addiction, and resulting physical and mental health challenges. Ultimately, the public will experience the harm that results from the proliferation of alcohol sales, and taxpayers will have to foot the bill. Only the business operator will profit – and even then, the odds of long- term profit are uncertain at best.

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In the midst of the pandemic, the city has an obligation to address the greatest needs of city residents. Clearly, there is no urgent need to increase the supply of alcohol or to make it even more accessible than it already is. There are currently hundreds of existing outlets to choose from across the city – restaurants, bars, liquor stores, grocery stores, warehouse stores, corner stores, even gas stations and nail salons. Home delivery of alcohol is permitted, and regulations are being relaxed to allow for the sale of individual alcoholic beverages “to go” on a takeout basis. But while consumers have a multitude of options available to obtain alcohol, the same cannot be said when it comes to accessing adequate and affordable food. This is particularly true for residents of low-income communities of color.

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I urge you to reject this measure and to redirect city resources to addressing the urgent and essential need for increased access to food.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary M. Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Mary M. Lee, Esq.