

May 30, 2018

Honorable Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, Chair
Assembly Local Government Committee
1020 N Street Room 157
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sent via Email

Re: SB 946 (Lara) – Support (as proposed to be amended)

Dear Chair Aguiar-Curry and members of the Committee:

On behalf of Investing in Place, I am writing to express our strong support for SB 946 (Lara) to protect workers and immigrant communities, while enhancing economic opportunities for low-income entrepreneurs in California.

At Investing in Place, we advocate to bridge the gap between policy thinkers, decision makers, and on-the-ground community leaders to reduce social inequities through public policies and investments. By investing in our most vulnerable neighborhoods, we improve public health and exceed environmental goals for the whole region. We recognize that equity is not a special interest, but in everybody's interest.

Across California, tens of thousands of people work as sidewalk vendors - selling delicious food and offering sought-after merchandise on public sidewalks and in public parks. For many Californians, including many immigrant families excluded from other opportunities in the formal economy, sidewalk vending offers a chance to start and grow a business. Safe, regulated sidewalk vending is also an integral part of the fabric of our communities.

Studies have demonstrated that sidewalk vending generates millions in local and state tax revenue as vendors buy supplies from local businesses and circulate money in communities that are often ignored by mainstream capital. In many food desert communities, fruit and vegetable vendors are the only source of healthy food retail available. Vendors activate commercial corridors, increase pedestrian foot traffic and provide eyes on the street to make neighborhoods safer and more dynamic.

Yet, despite the immense value to our communities, sidewalk vending is unfairly criminalized in cities and counties across California. Some jurisdictions impose an outright prohibition on sidewalk vending, while others impose onerous restrictions that severely limit vending and force workers into the informal economy. As a result, many sidewalk vendors face a harrowing catch-22: permits are impossible to obtain, but vending without a permit is prosecuted as a crime – often a misdemeanor. As a result, hardworking entrepreneurs who provide necessary goods are treated as criminals.

The criminalization of sidewalk vending has significant and devastating consequences, especially in immigrant communities. Vendors charged with a misdemeanor can face penalties of six months in jail and \$1,000 in fines, as well as the potential seizure of personal property. One misdemeanor charge can have

devastating effects on entire families that rely on the vendor's income to pay rent and put food on the table. These entrepreneurs are also discouraged from investing in their own business as the confiscation of their property and court fines often wipe out any capital they may accumulate. Some immigrant vendors face the risk of being transferred to or picked up by federal immigration officials after being released from custody. Moreover, some vendors may be at heightened risk for deportation even if they are not ultimately charged or convicted.

These risks are not merely hypothetical. Right now, a vendor and mother of five in Southern California is fighting deportation after spending months in a detention center, separated from her family. This situation stems directly from a simple sidewalk vending citation.¹ It is clear that federal immigration enforcement practices are currently threatening to tear immigrant families apart, and local policies that prohibit and criminalize sidewalk vending are enabling and exacerbating these risks.

SB 946 is a timely and necessary response to this injustice. SB 946 decriminalizes sidewalk vending, while allowing local jurisdictions to continue to enforce vending rules through non-criminal administrative fines and procedures. SB 946 also encourages local jurisdictions to adopt local sidewalk vending permitting regulations that will protect public safety while promoting entrepreneurship and economic mobility.

By encouraging local jurisdictions to support and properly regulate sidewalk vending, SB 946 will help protect California's low-income immigrants and workers, promote safe and regulated vending, and create new opportunities for entrepreneurship and economic mobility throughout the state. For those reasons, we ask for your "Aye" vote.

We look forward to working with you to pass SB 946 to help make California a safer and more inclusive place for immigrants, workers, entrepreneurs, consumers and all Californians.

Sincerely,



Jessica Meaney, Executive Director
Investing in Place
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Los Angeles, CA 90065

¹ Liset Marquez, "Street vendor facing deportation after Rancho Cucamonga arrest," Daily Bulletin, October 23, 2017. <https://www.dailybulletin.com/2017/10/23/street-vendor-facing-deportation-after-rancho-cucamonga-arrest/>