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Sent: Monday, August 9, 2021 10:51 AM

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Subject: Decriminalizing Street Vendors in Long Beach in compliance with SB946

-EXTERNAL-

To our contacts at the Long Beach Department of Health, Long Beach city council, office of Mayor Robert Garcia, and The Long Beach Post:

We are writing to share our experience as street vendors in Long Beach, to share our confusion and outrage with the unjust way micro-entrepreneurs are treated by the city, and to propose meaningful action and reform that is not only long overdue, but is required for state law compliance (SB946)

We launched our small business [Cafablanca](#), a mobile espresso bar for craft coffee catering, right before COVID-19 crushed the catering industry. In order to keep our dream of entrepreneurship alive, we had to figure out a way to adapt. We became stationary street vendors near our home in Long Beach, and we have been safely serving coffee and tea to our community for over a year without incident. We have the blessing of the property owners from the location in which we serve, and they have also given us full access to their permitted kitchen for all of our food prep/storage and sanitation needs. Most importantly, though — we are serving beverages OUTDOORS during an airborne pandemic and public health crisis. We are consistently encouraging people to wear masks and get vaccinated. We elected to stop operating entirely for two+ months during the winter surge. The work we are doing is not only giving our small business an unlikely shot at survival — it is also reducing community transmission of COVID-19.

Earlier this year the Health department received a food borne illness complaint about Cafablanca that we later learned was fabricated by a disgruntled neighbor (this was not the first time someone picked up the phone and used the city as muscle to make our coffee cart magically disappear). In our dialogue with the health department that ensued, we learned two things: there is currently no viable pathway for outdoor street vendors to get permitted and operate legally in the city of Long Beach. What's more upsetting was learning how the health department deals with these un-permit-able street vendors: criminal citations, jail time, confiscation of assets, and even deportation. We don't know who needs to hear this over at the city of Long Beach, but street vending is hard, honest work. It's a centuries long tradition that vitalizes cityscapes and offers valuable goods, services, and opportunities to disadvantaged communities. Street vendors are not criminals, and the city's treatment of us as such is entirely unacceptable.

The state of California agrees. In 2019 the Los Angeles street vendors coalition managed to get The Safe Sidewalk Vending act passed after years of pushing for reform. SB946 decriminalized street vendors throughout the state of California, and established requirements for local regulation —not prohibition— of sidewalk vending. The law also prohibits all criminal penalties for sidewalk vending violations and requires local authorities to adopt or amend existing regulations that govern sidewalk vending in order to protect micro-entrepreneurs like ourselves.

It seems that the City of Long Beach has not yet adapted to this new state law, because last Friday 8/6/21 Long Beach city inspectors visited Cafablanca and threatened us with a misdemeanor citation. That is what's happening in the attached video clip. Our problem is not that we don't have a permit — our problem is that the city has not provided us with a pathway to permitting.

We propose that the city issues a moratorium on ticketing street vendors until a viable pathway to health permits for outdoor street vendors is established in Long Beach. Our small business has built an expansive community of supporters here in the city, and we also have guidance and support from a vast network of street vending advocates who have been working with the city and county of Los Angeles to amend their municipal codes and give LA street vendors the safety, dignity and a pathway to permitting to which we are legally entitled with SB946. Long Beach street vendors are entitled to the same dignity and protections, and we are hopeful that our clear and urgent needs will be taken seriously by Long Beach city officials with meaningful action to follow.

We greatly appreciate your time, attention, and consideration.

-Cameron Kude, Juan Fernandez
cafablanca.com

