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August 30, 2018

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor of the State of California
State Capitol, 1st Floor Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support SB 946 (Lara) – Request for Signature

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA), I am writing to respectfully request your signature on SB 946 (Lara), the Safe Sidewalk Vending Act. SB 946 will protect workers and immigrant communities and enhance entrepreneurship for low-income Californians.

For the past 25 years, CFPA has been a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. Food insecurity has poverty as its root cause; when we remove barriers that allow all Californians to access work with dignity and without criminal penalties that hurt and separate families--we all benefit. SB 946 helps street vendors put more money in their pockets, and adequate food on their tables. It is a tragic irony that so many food chain workers, who feed and nourish our communities and families, are, themselves, suffering from hunger. Through this bill, we take one step closer towards building a stronger, healthier and more productive California for all.

Across California, tens of thousands of people work as sidewalk vendors - selling food and offering sought-after merchandise on public sidewalks and 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 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.



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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. 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 buy food. 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 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.

SB 946 is a timely and necessary response to this injustice as it decriminalizes sidewalk vending, and allows 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 politely ask for your signature.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beatriz Sosa-Prado". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beatriz Sosa-Prado, M.S.
Policy Advocate
California Food Policy Advocates