



August 26, 2015

VIA U.S. MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

Mayor Edward B. Murray
City of Seattle
PO Box 94749
Seattle, WA 98124-4749

Re: Enforcement Actions Against Hookah Lounges

Dear Mayor Murray,

The ACLU of Washington is concerned about the City's announced plan to shut down hookah lounges across the city. City enforcement decisions that will deprive business owners of their livelihood should not be made in haste. We support Councilmember Licata's request to delay the proposed enforcement effort for 60 days to give the City time to collect crime data in the areas near these establishments, analyze that data and report the findings to the public and the Council.

Private business owners may be responsible for the safety of their customers within their establishments. However, they are not responsible for preventing criminal conduct that occurs in the surrounding neighborhoods. Punishing business owners for the criminal actions of people outside of their establishments is unfair and ineffective. If the City closed every establishment that served customers who were later involved in a crime, there would be far fewer businesses in this city.

Public safety would be better served, and scarce city enforcement resources better used, if the City focused its efforts on identifying and addressing the root causes of violence rather than pursuing blanket enforcement efforts against a particular category of business. Effective enforcement efforts should include engaging with all segments of the community where the crime is occurring, and taking measures that have been proven to be effective in reducing that crime. Examples of such measures might include increasing police patrols in areas where violent crime has occurred, funding services to prevent and intervene in youth violence and retaliation, and funding community programs that engage youth and provide alternatives to gangs. The City should also examine the potentially disproportionate impact of its proposed enforcement on particular ethnic or racial groups before moving forward.

Street violence is a concern for all people in Seattle. We urge you to ensure the City's response to this violence is both effective in addressing the problem and does

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not unfairly target business owners for conduct in public areas outside of and unrelated to the service inside of their businesses.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Shaw
Deputy Director

Cc: Jean Godden, Council Member, Position 1
Kshama Sawant, Council Member, Position 2
Bruce Harrell, Council Member, Position 3
Sally Bagshaw, Council Member, Position 4
Tom Rasmussen, Council Member, Position 5
Nick Licata, Council Member, Position 6
Tim Burgess, Council Member, Position 7
Mike O'Brien, Council Member, Position 8
John Okamoto, Council Member, Position 9
Newell Aldrich, Legislative Assistant to Nick Licata
Lisa Herbold, Legislative Assistant to Nick Licata
Frank Video, Legislative Aide to Nick Licata
Hyeok Kim, Deputy Mayor – External Affairs, Office of the Mayor
David Mendoza, Policy Advisor, Office of the Mayor