

Communication from Public

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Council File No: 25-0838

Comments for Public Posting: See Attached Letter of Support for PLUM item # 2 CF 25-0838



August 23, 2025

Los Angeles City Planning and Land Use Committee
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Letter of Support – Council File 25-0838, Agenda Item #2
Improving the Inspection and Permitting Process for Restaurant Equipment

Dear Honorable Chair and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Independent Hospitality Coalition (IHC), representing over 800 independent restaurants and hospitality businesses across Los Angeles, I write to express our strong support for **Council File 25-0838, Agenda Item #2**.

The restaurant industry is a cornerstone of Los Angeles' economy, employing nearly half a million people in the region prior to the pandemic and generating millions in tax revenue annually. Yet, small businesses are being held back by outdated and inefficient permitting and inspection processes for restaurant equipment. At a time when the City of Los Angeles faces serious budget shortfalls and our local economy remains fragile, it is critical to act now. Streamlining this process will reduce costs both for small businesses trying to stay afloat and for City departments managing limited staffing and resources.

Our coalition has repeatedly documented challenges with the current system:

- **Over-enforcement by the LA County Department of Public Health (LACDPH):** Existing food service locations are being red-tagged, delayed, or even shut down for adding basic equipment such as sinks, ovens, or espresso machines—even when no public safety threat exists. In some cases, inspectors post demeaning closure notices that damage a business's reputation overnight. This aggressive enforcement culture creates fear and instability at a time when our economy remains fragile.
- **Costly and Time-Consuming Permitting:** To install even basic equipment, operators must find licensed subcontractors, navigate unclear permit requirements, and face building inspectors who often expand scope once on-site. These delays not only increase costs but also postpone openings, hurting both businesses and the City's tax base.
- **Disconnect from Business Realities:** Regulation staff often acknowledge these requirements are excessive, but leadership has yet to implement practical reforms. The result is a system that works against small businesses instead of supporting them.

We strongly support the Council's effort to instruct LADBS and the City Attorney to bring forward solutions. Specifically, IHC recommends the following reforms, which mirror the motion's direction:

1. Expand Virtual Inspections: Many installations only require visual verification and could be safely expedited with remote inspections.
2. Extend Self-Certification to Commercial Contractors: Licensed contractors already assume liability; empowering them to self-certify minor installations (sinks, ovens, espresso machines, etc.) would reduce LADBS workload and speed compliance.
3. Introduce Single Inspector Continuity: Assigning one inspector per project would avoid conflicting demands between inspectors and provide consistency.
4. Clarify "Like-for-Like" Replacements: Equipment replacements with equivalent capacity (e.g., water pressure, ventilation) should be explicitly exempt from additional permitting and inspections.

Implementing these reforms will lower operating costs for restaurants, free up LADBS resources, and protect tax revenues that the City urgently needs. This is a win-win solution that ensures safety while making government more efficient and business-friendly.

The Independent Hospitality Coalition believes these changes will significantly improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary closures, and restore balance between enforcement and business support. We stand ready to collaborate with LADBS leadership and City staff to identify specific items appropriate for self-certification and to ensure that reforms are both practical and effective.

We urge the Committee to move this item forward swiftly and to signal clearly that Los Angeles is committed to supporting small businesses during this critical period of economic recovery.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,
Eddie Navarrette

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eddie Navarrette', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Executive Director
Independent Hospitality Coalition