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July 18, 2013

Land Use and Economic Development Committee
San Francisco Board of Supervisors
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
City Hall, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Members of the Land Use and Economic Development Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Healthy Food Retailer Ordinance (File No. 120966). SPUR supports this ordinance and its goal of focusing greater attention and concentrated effort on increasing healthy food retail options throughout the city.

As we detail in our recent report, *Locally Nourished*, the ability of residents to access and afford fresh, healthy food is important to both the quality of life and the public health of San Franciscans. Many people in the city, especially those with low incomes, do not have convenient access to fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthy options near their homes.

Though the proposed ordinance would create a new program in the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, it is also clear in its aim to build on existing efforts within that department as well as those supported by the Department of Public Health, including the corner store initiatives of the Southeast Food Access Working Group (SEFA) and the HEAL Zone. Alongside our general support of the ordinance, we recommend the following considerations for the new program:

1) Establish a clear set of targets and evaluation metrics in the program's first year. The legislation lists three goals: "increase access to healthy food; reduce unhealthy influences such as tobacco, alcohol and processed food high in salt, fat, and sugar in underserved parts of the City; and stimulate economic development and job creation." However, the legislation does not include any provision detailing how the City will measure progress toward those goals. Potential metrics include: increased sales of healthy food; increased availability of healthy food; greater affordability of healthy food; reduced prevalence or sales of tobacco, alcohol, and junk food; increased customer traffic among fresh food retailers; and/or job creation. A more difficult metric – but an important one – is measuring the long-term effects of access to healthy food retail on consumer behavior and health. Deciding on specific metrics and targets should be a top priority for the program so that its effectiveness can be evaluated going forward.

2) Ensure that incentives and assistance offered by the program to local businesses have some measure of accountability. The current pilot projects sponsored by SEFA with corner stores in the Bayview require a contract between the business owners and the city agency providing assistance that includes commitments to participate in the healthy food retail program for a certain length of time; to provide

data to the city to track the effectiveness of the program; and to receive reduced benefits if they exit the program early. This is an important model to continue going forward that could be expanded to include various tiers of commitment in exchange for various levels of assistance. Another idea that could help sustain the program is to ask business owners who have participated for a number of years to serve as mentors for business owners who are new to the program and transitioning to a new range of product offerings. However the details are structured, it will be important for the program to clearly detail the obligations of both the city and the business owners.

3) Structure assistance with an eye toward long-term financial sustainability. Improving food access requires not only increasing supply, but also matching it with demand. A truly successful incentive program will provide businesses with enough assistance to make positive changes that they can then sustain, with customer support, after the government assistance finishes. The pilot projects in the Bayview have already started to provide lessons regarding the difficulty of fresh food distribution to corner stores and building consumer demand. Incorporating these lessons in any future assistance programs is one way to increase the chance of long-term success. Another tool that could be useful is the use of loans to businesses that complement any grant assistance.

With clear targets, evaluation metrics, and programs that offer commitments that support both long-term healthy food retail goals and business success, we believe that the Healthy Food Retailer Ordinance will provide a positive step forward for city's food access efforts. Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Z.', written in a cursive style.

Eli Zigas
Food Systems and Urban Agriculture
Program Manager

CC: Supervisor Eric Mar