

UNITEHERE! Local 11

464 Lucas Ave., Suite 201 • Los Angeles, California 90017 • (213) 481-8530 • FAX (213) 481-0352

October 30, 2017

Mayor Eric Garcetti
200 N. Spring St. Los Angeles, CA 90012

Councilmember Gilbert Cedillo
Councilmember Paul Krekorian
Councilmember Bob Blumenfield
Councilmember David E. Ryu
Councilmember Paul Koretz
Councilmember Nury Martinez
Councilmember Monica Rodriguez
Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson
Councilmember Curren D. Price, Jr.
Councilmember Herb J. Wesson, Jr.
Councilmember Mike Bonin
Councilmember Mitchell Englander
Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell
Councilmember Jose Huizar
Councilmember Joe Buscaino
Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring St. Los Angeles, CA 90012

Via Electronic Mail

Re: City Council File 17-1127

Dear Mayor Garcetti and City Council Members:

I write on behalf of UNITE HERE Local 11 to express opposition to the proposed ordinance that would make it illegal for members of the public to bring certain types of signs to public protests and demonstrations.

The rhetoric supporting the ordinance has focused on the need to bar the possession of weapons at protests. But as the ACLU of Southern California noted in its October 29, 2017 letter to the Council opposing the ordinance, the possession of such weapons in public is already illegal under provisions of the California Penal Code. The ordinance would have little bearing on the ability of the police to protect the public from persons possessing weapons at protests.

The principle change in the law that the ordinance *would* effect is to make it illegal for members of the public to bring signs to protests that are not sufficiently “soft” or exceed a specified width. Specifically, Section 3 of the proposed ordinance would make it illegal to possess a “sign, poster, banner, plaque or notice” at a demonstration, rally, picket line, or public assembly that is not constructed of a “soft material, such as cloth, paper or plastic capable of being rolled or folded” or of “cardboard material” that is no “greater than 1/4 inch in thickness.” As an organization that regularly organizes public demonstrations and picket lines, we know well—and as anyone who has participated in the Women’s March or recent protests to protect the rights of immigrants and refugees can attest—the peaceful use of creative signage and props that do not comply with these narrow strictures is commonplace. Their prohibition makes little sense and amounts to needless and unjustified interference with basic First Amendment-protected activities.

At a time when the ability of the public to peacefully express dissent has never been greater, our City government should not be taking steps which have the effect of restricting and chilling free speech activities. While we appreciate the good intentions that may underlie support for this ordinance, the measure as drafted violates First Amendment interests and we strongly encourage the Council to reject it.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jeremy Blasi

Jeremy Blasi
Staff Attorney
UNITE HERE Local 11

464 South Lucas Ave, Suite 201
Los Angeles, CA 90017
Fax: 213-481-0352
Tel: 213-481-8530 x233