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Ordinance Aims To Decrease Tobacco Permits In Low-Income Neighborhoods

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The San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance earlier this week that will stop the issuance of new tobacco permits to retailers in San Francisco's low-income neighborhoods with already high tobacco densities.

The ordinance, introduced by San Francisco Supervisor Eric Mar and co-sponsored by Supervisors Jane Kim and Scott Wiener, will be an amendment to the city's health code and aims to create equity in the number of tobacco permits per district in San Francisco.

The restriction, approved by the supervisors at their meeting Tuesday, is intended to address the growing epidemic of tobacco use by youth.

The six San Francisco districts with the highest proportions of tobacco retail sales by population also have the city's lowest median household incomes, according to the legislation.

In District 6, which includes the Tenderloin and South of Market neighborhoods, the median household income is \$38,610, but retailers hold about 270 tobacco permits. In District 2, which includes the Marina and Pacific Heights neighborhoods, the median household income is \$102,457 and there are only 51 tobacco permits held by retailers, according to the legislation.

The legislation further states that black and Hispanic residents are more likely to live in districts with the highest number of tobacco retail outlets.

The Youth Leadership Institute's Tobacco Use Reduction Force conducted assessments and data analysis to address the disproportion of tobacco density in areas such as the Tenderloin, Potrero Hill, Mission and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods.

The San Francisco Department of Public Health has funded and worked with the Youth Leadership Institute since 2011, supporting youth in mapping tobacco permits and gathering data that shows the density of tobacco permits in communities that are low-income and primarily populated with people of color.

To gradually reduce the high level of tobacco permits in those neighborhoods, the ordinance places a cap of 45 tobacco permits for each of San Francisco's 11 districts.

New tobacco permits will only be issued in districts with fewer than 45 permits, according to a joint statement released this week from Supervisor Mar, the Youth Leadership Institute, the San Francisco Tobacco Free Coalition and Healthy Retail San Francisco.

New permits issued in districts with less than 45 permits must be located at least 500 feet away from schools and existing tobacco retailers. No new permits will be issued to restaurants or bars, according to the legislation.

While no current permit holders will have their permits removed, through attrition, the ordinance is designed to slim down the number of tobacco retailers in the city over the coming years.

Mar said the ordinance was crafted in coordination with a number of community groups, including the Arab American Grocers Association, which is the city's largest association of small independent markets representing more than 400 separate retailers, Healthy Retail San Francisco, which helps corner stores increase healthy food options, and the Youth Leadership Institute's Tobacco Use Reduction Force, among others.

Hannah Albarazi, Bay City News

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