

Testimony in Favor of Juice Bar Amendment

Good evening, Honorable Chair Richard Furlow, Honorable Vice Chair Jeanette Morrison, and distinguished members of the Legislation Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this zoning amendment.

My name is Veneeta Dayal, and I am a downtown New Haven resident residing at 85 Church Street.

For years, my neighbors and I have lived with the consequences of 18-and-over juice bar establishments. While many people think about what happens inside these venues, we live with what happens outside them.

We've endured late-night noise, crowds spilling onto our streets, litter, public urination, fights, vandalism, and people lingering outside our homes into the early morning hours. Police cars, ambulances, and flashing lights became a regular part of life. It affected our sleep, our sense of security, and our quality of life.

Some of my neighbors have moved away because they could no longer tolerate the disruption. Others have stayed because they love New Haven and believe our downtown can be both vibrant and safe.

Then things became even more heartbreaking.

For two consecutive Halloweens, innocent people were shot downtown. Last year, an 18-year-old young woman was killed just steps from our homes. Families watched the aftermath from their apartment windows. Those moments changed our neighborhood forever.

I know this zoning amendment won't solve every public safety challenge.

But zoning exists for exactly this reason—to learn from experience and guide future land uses that are compatible with the surrounding community.

This amendment does not close existing businesses or ban restaurants, bars, or nightlife. It simply says that, moving forward, New Haven should not continue permitting new alcohol-serving establishments to include all-ages juice bars that have repeatedly created public safety and quality-of-life concerns.

This vote is especially important today because Rumaj has closed and that space is now available for lease. We have an opportunity to make a thoughtful planning decision before another operator recreates the same business model.

Downtown is home to thousands of residents, businesses, and visitors. We all deserve a downtown that is lively, welcoming, and safe.

We cannot change what has already happened, but we can decide what kind of downtown we want for the future.

I respectfully ask you to support this zoning amendment.

Thank you.