

June 29, 2026

Public Written Testimony

Board of Alders Legislation Committee
165 Church Street, 2nd Floor, New Haven, CT 06510

RE: In Support of OR-2026-0013 — Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment on Juice Bars

Dear Chair and Members of the Legislation Committee,

My name is Christine Kim, and I serve as the Alder for Ward 7, which encompasses parts of East Rock and Downtown. I write in strong support of OR-2026-0013 and respectfully urge the Committee to vote in favor.

Despite the name, a juice bar is not a smoothie shop. Under state law (C.G.S. § 30-22c), it is a separate area within a cafe-permitted venue where patrons under 21 are admitted while alcohol is served elsewhere in the same establishment — enabling late-night, all-ages events that mix minors with a full bar operation. Our zoning code currently makes no distinction for these uses. This amendment creates that framework for the first time: it does not close any existing business; it prevents new juice bars from opening.

These establishments are concentrated in and around my ward, and their effects on public safety and quality of life are well documented in the City’s police and licensing records — including the fatal shooting downtown last Halloween, amid a late-night crowd of thousands. I will not rehearse those details here. My point is simpler: downtown is more residential than ever, and growing denser every year. With more than 1,500 new homes added last year and our Downtown for All zoning inviting taller, denser residential blocks, more families than ever live directly above and beside this nightlife. Our rules should keep pace with the neighborhood downtown is becoming.

The need is also immediate. The recent closure of Rumaj has left a vacancy that, under today’s rules, a new late-night operation of the same kind could fill. New state oversight tools take effect October 1, and remonstrance proceedings address existing permits — but zoning is the City’s own lever, and the only one that prevents a new juice bar from opening in the first place.

This measure is not directed at any individual business or owner. It is a prospective, content-neutral zoning change that closes a gap in our code, so that we can have a downtown that is both lively and safe. I respectfully ask the Committee to vote in favor of OR-2026-0013. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to the safety and quality of life of New Haven residents.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Kim
Alder, Ward 7
City of New Haven