

Member, Board of Supervisors
District 3



City and County of San Francisco

AARON PESKIN

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*** PRESS RELEASE ***

Supervisor Peskin Introduces "Love Your Local Laundromat" Legislation

San Francisco - Today, Supervisor Aaron Peskin introduced legislation to stem the rate of laundromat closures in San Francisco. According to data from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, nearly 1 in 3 laundromats in the city have shuttered over the last decade. As of this year, 204 laundromats remain, down from 288 in 2013 - a net loss of 84 laundromats, a third of the total neighborhood-serving facilities in less than a decade.

"The sharp decrease in the number of laundromats in San Francisco is staggering, and it's not for lack of need for this essential service," said **Supervisor Aaron Peskin**, whose office has been studying the loss of laundromats in San Francisco for over a year. "The City has gone to great lengths to ensure that small businesses can survive this pandemic, but too often that conversation ignores community-serving businesses like laundromats that are essential for San Franciscans living on fixed incomes and in older housing, and also for tight-knit communities that love their local small businesses. Neighbors love their laundromats just like they love their restaurants and hardware stores - and when we talk about an equitable recovery, it has to be for all our essential small businesses."

Research performed by Supervisor Peskin's Office over the past year shows that laundromat locations strongly correspond with higher density residential neighborhoods in San Francisco, with particularly high concentrations in Districts 3 and 9. Laundromats also cluster in areas with lower median incomes and in areas with greater racial diversity, like Chinatown, the Tenderloin, Lower Nob Hill, and the Mission District. The legislation also protects dry cleaning services, which are often the only places where linens and bedding can be pressure cleaned with high temperatures, a service many residents relied on more heavily during the pandemic.

"Protecting cleaning services from being shut down is absolutely an equity issue for lower-income residents and communities of color across San Francisco," said **Pratibha Tekkey, Director of Community Organizing at Central City SRO Collaborative**. "We rely on these neighborhood services for everything from treating bedbug infestations to providing affordable alterations and mending. When laundromats become less geographically accessible, or when the price to do a load of wash increases even marginally, our residents really suffer."

On September 10, 2020, the San Francisco Planning Commission voted 4-3 to reject an application to build an Accessory Dwelling Unit in a ground floor commercial space occupied by neighborhood laundromat Tons of Bubbles, at 998 Filbert Street. At the time, over 100 residents wrote and called in to testify that the laundromat serves a predominately senior and low-income community, and to highlight the necessity of laundromats during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Laundromats are a profitable business, but that doesn't mean they can always compete for rents with higher revenue businesses and tourist-oriented businesses, so of course we become targets for landlord speculation," said **Deanna Caprini-Fusch, owner of San Francisco**

laundromat Tons of Bubbles. "My customers are not necessarily wealthy, but they need this laundromat. Over the course of the last year, when we faced displacement, it was among the most essential businesses in the neighborhood."

"From a citywide perspective, laundromats tend to be concentrated in multi-unit, multi-family buildings, and they disproportionately serve communities of color," said **Planning Commissioner Deland Chan.** "This is a needs-based service and part of our city's social infrastructure. We should be looking at this issue from a racial and social equity lens."

"Many local laundromats actually provide a space for neighbors to connect, as well as serving other small businesses in the area. The youth in our afterschool and summer programs screenprint a lot of our merchandise, and my team and I have relied on Oak Street Laundry in our hood to batch wash all of their creations," said **Shawn Connolly, Executive Director of the San Francisco Skate Club.** "The pandemic has hit so many of our small businesses hard, and we all have to look out for each other and make sure that we keep our neighborhoods from being carved up and hollowed out."

The legislation introduced today would require the Planning Commission to determine, at a public hearing, that replacing a laundromat with another use is necessary and desirable. It would also require the replacement of in-building laundry services if they are removed for the construction of an Accessory Dwelling Unit.

The legislation will be available for public review during the August legislative recess, after which it will be scheduled for a hearing at the Land Use and Transportation Committee in September 2021.

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