



TESTIMONY

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BOARD BILL 14: STREAMLINING FOOD TRUCK OPERATIONS IN THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS

By Avery Frank

Testimony before the City of St. Louis Special Committee
on Reducing Red Tape

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THIS COMMITTEE

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Avery Frank. I am a policy analyst at the Show-Me Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, Missouri-based think tank that advances sensible, well-researched, free-market solutions to state and local policy issues. The ideas presented here are my own and summarize research regarding mobile food vendors.

The food truck industry has grown rapidly in recent years, increasing from 8,677 food truck businesses in the U.S. in 2011 to 36,324 businesses in 2023.¹ In the City of St. Louis, food trucks provide food and beverages at events ranging from the Great Forest Park Balloon Race to the STL Taco Fest.²

Board Bill 14 would remove the restriction confining food trucks to vending districts and eliminate the requirement for them to be at least 150 feet from another licensed vendor or existing business selling comparable goods. I would like to commend this bill for its simplistic and straightforward approach to cutting red tape and making the City of St. Louis more business and consumer friendly.

Bolstering Competition in the City of St. Louis

Board Bill 14 allows food trucks to move to places of demand (allowing them to take advantage of their mobility), while also retaining measures that ensure that these trucks do not become a public nuisance. Restrictions still remain to prevent food trucks from blocking ramps or curb cuts or otherwise inconveniencing the public.

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Board Bill 14 also removes the restriction that prevents a vendor from conducting business within 150 feet from another licensed vendor offering comparable goods. Removing this restriction allows for greater competition, more options for consumers, and more opportunities for food truck operators to thrive without arbitrary barriers.

Competition drives improvement, innovation, and lower prices for consumers. Brick-and-mortar shops can also benefit from the increased foot traffic generated by food trucks and gain insight into their competitors' successful practices. Concerns about exacerbating a "labor shortage" are unfounded, as the average food truck business has 1.2 employees.³

The City of St. Louis should reexamine the rationale behind the exclusion of food truck operations in certain areas of the Kingsway East, Kingsway West, Penrose, and Mark Twain neighborhoods. Removing these exclusions could further amplify this bill's positive impact.

Other Missouri cities, such as Lake Ozark and Clayton, have found a variety of ways to allow food trucks into their cities. This bill would make the City of St. Louis one of the least restrictive in the state, allowing innovative entrepreneurs to reach more customers and contribute to the vibrant food culture of St. Louis.⁴

NOTES

1. McCain, Abby. *21 Important Food Truck Statistics [2023]: Analysis, Trends, and Projections*. Zippia, 12 May 2023, www.zippia.com/advice/food-truck-statistics.
2. STL TACO FEST, www.stltacofest.com; The Great Forest Park Balloon Race, greatforestparkballoonrace.com/about-us/.
3. Frank, Avery. *Ladue Food Trucks Have Started Rolling-Now We Need to Step on the Gas*. Show-Me Institute, 30 Sept. 2022, www.showmeinstitute.org/blog/regulation/ladue-food-trucks-have-started-rollingnow-we-need-to-step-on-the-gas/.
4. Baier, Corianna. *Food Trucks in Ladue*. Show-Me Institute, 27 Oct. 2021, <https://showmeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/2021027-Ladue-Food-Trucks-Baier.pdf>



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