



November 12, 2025

To: The San Francisco Board of Supervisors

Re: Board of Supervisors ordinance amending the Police Code to increase the fine for misdemeanor convictions for sideshow offenses (Item 250983)

Dear Supervisors,

We write to express our concern with Ordinance 250983 [Police Code - Vehicle Sideshows] and oppose the proposed increase in fines for misdemeanor convictions for sideshow offenses from a maximum of \$500 to a maximum of \$1,000.¹

While we understand the desire to align San Francisco with jurisdictions like Oakland, Alameda County, San Jose, and Fresno, that have all increased fines to \$1,000, **increased fines in these**

¹ Board of Supervisors Legislation Introduced at Roll Call. 30 Sept. 2025, sfbos.org/sites/default/files/LI093025.pdf.

jurisdictions have not led to a meaningful reduction in the frequency of sideshows or the number of spectators who watch them. While Oakland increased its fines in 2023, sideshows in Oakland are still prevalent. In 2024, the Oakland Police Department’s Special Operations Division stated that violent crimes, such as sideshow incidents had actually increased.² This year, hundreds of spectators still gathered at sideshows,³ and the Oakland Police Department reports that in 2025, OPD has seized more than 170 vehicles connected to sideshow activity in Oakland.⁴ This aligns with well-established research: higher fines do not deter behavior that is social, impulsive, or collective. Instead, financial penalties of this scale fall most heavily on low-income residents, deepening cycles of poverty and punishment rather than improving public safety.⁵ Indeed, “fines, fees, and financial penalties can trap low-income residents in a maze of poverty and punishment and prevent people from succeeding.”⁶

Second, this ordinance would also likely sweep in people who are simply **in the wrong place at the wrong time.**

For example, in Stockton –where the fine is \$1,000 and jail time is authorized—an innocent bystander is still facing legal and professional harm more than a year later. The proposed change risks replicating those harms here in San Francisco⁷.

We are additionally concerned that enforcement will fall disproportionately on Black and Brown communities. In Alameda County, the Public Defender has seen exactly this pattern in sideshow-related prosecutions.⁸ And since SFPD has a documented history of racially disproportionate traffic enforcement, and only recently has the City taken steps to curtail pretext stops, increasing fines in this context risks undoing recent progress and worsening racial disparities.

² Oakland Police Department Special Operations Division. “OAKLAND POLICE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING AGENDA.” *Oaklandca.gov*, 11 Apr. 2024, www.oaklandca.gov/files/assets/city/v/1/public-meetings/police-commission/2024/opc-regular-meeting-4.11.2024.fin.pdf.

³ <https://www.ktvu.com/news/500-appear-oakland-sideshow-police-union-complains-about-staffing>

⁴ [You Can Run, But You Can’t Hide: OPD Seizes 170+ Sideshow Vehicles | City of Oakland, CA](#)

⁵ National Institute of Justice. “Five Things about Deterrence.” *Office of Justice Programs*, U.S. Department of Justice, May 2016, www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/247350.pdf.

⁶ The Financial Justice Project San Francisco. “Homepage.” *Financial Justice Project*, 26 Aug. 2024, www.sfgov.org/financialjustice/#whats_new. Accessed 15 Oct. 2025.

⁷ Madisen Keavy. “Many Vehicles Seized from Stockton Sideshow Bust Still Impounded a Year Later.” *Cbsnews.com*, 4 Feb. 2025, www.cbsnews.com/sacramento/news/san-joaquin-county-sideshow-bust-one-year-later-many-vehicles-still-seized/

⁸ Flores, Jessica. “Alameda County Law That Would Criminalize Watching Sideshows Advances.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 June 2023, www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/alameda-county-sideshow-ordinance-spectators-18175117.php.

Rather than escalating ineffective punishments, San Francisco should focus on environmental and community-based prevention. Oakland’s Department of Transportation has begun installing bollards, steel plates, and curb extensions to disrupt intersections commonly used for sidseshows, and nearby residents have already reported a decrease in activity.⁹ Roadway design, youth engagement, and investment in community-based programming are evidence-based strategies that promote safety without exacerbating inequality and racial disparities in the criminal legal system.”¹⁰

Finally, sidseshows are already illegal, imposing even harsher penalties by increasing the fines for misdemeanor sidseshows is ineffective, and fails to solve the problem while creating additional inequitable outcomes for Black and Brown communities who are already overpoliced and underserved.

A more effective and equitable solution would focus on education and community-based initiatives that promote youth employment, education, and engagement, as well as road safety infrastructure.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote no on Ordinance 250983.

Sincerely,

ACLU of Northern California
Secure Justice
San Francisco Public Defender’s Office
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
Young Women’s Freedom Center
Community Forward
Homeless Youth Alliance
CAIR- SF Bay Area
Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice
California Coalition for Women Prisoners
National Harm Reduction Coalition
Anti-Police Terror Project
Indivisible- SF
League of Women Voters of San Francisco
Harvey Milk LGBTQ Democratic Club
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area
HIV Advocacy Network
3rd Street Youth Center and Clinic
Critical Resistance
Support Life Foundation

⁹ Bailey, Crystal. “Oakland’s Sideshow Deterrent Measures Are Working Neighbors Say.” *KTVU FOX 2 San Francisco*, KTVU FOX 2, 24 July 2025, www.ktvu.com/news/oaklands-road-changes-detering-sideshows-neighbors-say

¹⁰ City of Oakland. “Sideshow Prevention Efforts.” *Oaklandca.gov*, 2024, www.oaklandca.gov/Public-Safety-Streets/Transportation-Projects-Reports/Sideshow-Prevention-Efforts. Accessed 28 Oct. 2025.

