

Dear Planning Commission and City Council,

We are writing today on behalf of the Jain Center of Northern California to give you additional background related to our views about the new food policy being created.

Jainism is one of the oldest practicing religions in the world, with some historians dating the origins of the religion around the ancient Indus Valley civilizations in Mohenjadaro and Harappa. Though most numerous in present day India, our rich cultural tradition of scholarship, nonviolence and political engagement have informed the development of many nations, cultures and religious practices throughout the centuries.

Although Jains are a minority population in Oakland, we nonetheless consider that our beliefs are relevant and need to be acknowledged in the revision of the laws pertaining to urban farming and food policy.

As a faith community Jains do not eat animals or animal products, slaughtered locally or anywhere else for that matter. It is part of our culture and religious belief system that people should be nonviolent towards all living beings, and for this reason we request that Oakland remove animals from the food policy.

- ✧ We believe that violence to others, including animals, also results in violence to ourselves. We believe that Oakland is violent enough without having more graphic violence in our backyards. We believe that a culture of compassion will make for a better community.
- ✧ We are upset by the idea that Oakland is attempting to pass a food policy that would subject us to animals being killed next door, in our block, or in our neighborhood.
- ✧ We are concerned that our children would be desensitized to killing by witnessing the act of killing, seeing their friends or their friends' parents kill animals. It may lead to difficult interactions with others or result in our children learning to kill, which threatens our values and our cultural traditions. Many immigrants find it challenging to maintain important values and to fit into mainstream society; this policy makes it that much harder.
- ✧ Many of us are health professionals who understand that consuming animals results in higher rates of heart disease, diabetes and certain kinds of cancer and we don't want to encourage this in our food policy.

We are deeply offended that the City of Oakland has taken it upon itself to create a new arm of the animal agriculture industry that would harm animals with little to no oversight, and with no consideration for the viewpoint of the many religious traditions of our diverse city, including Jainism, Hinduism, and Buddhism that encourage people to strive toward an ideal of nonviolence toward people and animals.

As Jains we are acutely familiar with the fact that a food system need not include animal products to be just, healthful and sustainable. Indeed, the Jain people have lived long and healthy lives for centuries, eating a vegetarian diet since long before the United States

was founded. For the above reasons, we urge you remove animals from the urban agriculture policy.

Sincerely,

Ms. Shobha Vora, President, Jain Center of Northern California (JCNC)

Jina Shah, MD, MPH, Oakland resident and member of JCNC

Maneesh Kenia, Oakland resident and member of JCNC

Kalpana Jain, Oakland resident and member of JCNC

Rina Shah, MD, Walnut Creek resident and member of JCNC

Suketu Khandhar, MD and Hetal Khandhar, MD, Walnut Creek Residents and members of JCNC

Amman Desai, UC Berkeley student and member of JCNC

Representing the Jain community of the Bay area and others throughout the country