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Milwaukee Expands Licensing Requirements to Include Hookah Establishments

Milwaukee, WI — The Milwaukee Common Council has unanimously approved file #24661, which adopts a new ordinance requiring establishments that offer hookah service to obtain a public entertainment premises license. Sponsored by **Alderman Peter Burgelis, Alderperson JoCasta Zamarripa, Alderwoman Sharlen Moore, Alderwoman Larresa Taylor, Alderman Lamont Westmoreland, Alderwoman Milele A. Cogg, and Alderman Mark Chambers, Jr.**, the ordinance adds hookah lounges to the list of venues considered public entertainment spaces.

This update aligns hookah-serving establishments with other venues that offer recreational or entertainment activities, ensuring they are subject to the same public safety, zoning, and operational standards.

“Establishments offering hookah are part of our city’s evolving entertainment scene,” said Licenses Committee Chair Alderperson Zamarripa. “This ordinance helps ensure consistency in how these venues are regulated, promoting safety, accountability, and neighborhood compatibility.”

Alderman Peter Burgelis stated, “This is a step forward to a healthier community. We heard from our City Attorney’s Office that we are legally unable to correct our city ordinance age for tobacco use to 21. I’ll introduce that again as soon as Madison corrects its flawed state law. Milwaukee remains committed to legislating a healthier community.”

The ordinance defines “hookah service” as the rental or complimentary use of a hookah provided by an establishment and includes it under the broader umbrella of public entertainment offerings.

The measure now waits for Mayor Johnson’s signature and will take effect 90 days later.

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