

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH

September 30, 2025

Support for SB 20, Silicosis Training, Outreach, and Prevention (STOP) Act
(Menjivar)

Silicosis is a preventable, progressive, and often fatal occupational lung disease caused by inhalation of respirable crystalline silica (RCS). California is experiencing a surge in engineered stone-associated cases among counter fabrication workers. As of September 15, 2025, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has identified 385 artificial stone-related silicosis cases statewide, including 202 in Los Angeles County, with 22 deaths to date. Los Angeles County is the national epicenter due to the density of fabrication shops and improved surveillance.

Despite alternatives being readily available, engineered stone slabs, which are typically comprised of greater than 90% silica by weight with polymer resins and pigments, are the most popular type of countertops used in kitchens and bathrooms, on both residential and commercial remodels and new builds. When cut, ground, or polished, particularly with dry processing or inadequate controls, engineered stone slabs generate a high concentration of RCS. If proper preventative measures are not

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applied during the fabrication process (including industrial design measures as well as protective equipment for workers), RCS can be released into the workplace where workers may be exposed. When inhaled into the lungs, RCS causes airway and interstitial inflammation and scarring leading to accelerated and chronic silicosis, respiratory failure, and increased risk of mycobacterial disease (including tuberculosis), autoimmune disease, and lung cancer. Prolonged exposure to RCS will lead to permanent disability or death. There is no cure; lung transplantation is rarely available and confers limited long-term survival. Preventing exposure is therefore paramount.

California Senate Bill 20 (SB 20), sponsored by State Senator Caroline Menjivar, strengthens enforcement of occupational safety and health laws to better protect workers from exposure to RCS. As amended on September 2, 2025, the bill enhances protections and case detection by tightening training requirements in stone-fabrication shops, increasing Cal/OSHA oversight and enforcement, and establishing clear reporting pathways between Cal/OSHA and CDPH as well as triggers for investigations and mitigation measures when cases are identified. The bill also requires Cal/OSHA to enforce relevant safety provisions by issuing citations of civil penalty for violations. SB 20 has been approved by the legislature and is awaiting the Governor's signature.

If this legislation is enacted and robustly implemented, exposure to RCS could be reduced (though not eliminated) among workers who cut and fabricate artificial stone. While this legislation would provide some benefit, it will be critical to pursue additional policy strategies to reduce RCS exposure and support affected workers. It is imperative that workers are protected from silicosis—a life-threatening and fully preventable disease.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors suspend Section 22.1 of the Rules of the Board for the limited purpose of considering this motion.

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

- 1) Direct the Chief Executive Office's Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch (CEO-LAIR) to support SB 20 and urge Governor Newsom to sign the bill.
- 2) Direct CEO-LAIR, in collaboration with DPH and DHS, to continue advocating at the State and federal levels for proposals that strengthen legislative and regulatory standards and enhance resources and education related to silicosis prevention.

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