

From: [Jen Grand-Lejano](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Agenda #11 - oppose cannabis smoking in lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 1:43:26 PM
Attachments: [ACSCAN_RGB_sm.png](#)
[Santa Cruz County oppose cannabis smoke Jan 2025 cc.pdf](#)

******CAUTION:** This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email. ****

Dear Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors,

Please see the attached letter urging you to consider the dangers of secondhand cannabis smoke and oppose any cannabis consumption lounge options that would allow smoking. I'm available should you have any questions.

Thank you,



Jen Grand-Lejano
Senior Government Relations Director, Northern
California & Grant Program
m: 925.639.9130
fightcancer.org | 1.800.227.2345

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January 23, 2025

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
701 Ocean Street, Room 500
Santa Cruz, CA 95060



Dear Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors:

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network's (ACS CAN) mission is to end suffering and death from cancer, and we are committed to continuing that mission in Santa Cruz County. **We are very concerned about the dangers of cannabis secondhand smoke. At the January 28th Board of Supervisors meeting you will consider options to allow cannabis consumption at retail locations, and we urge you to vote against any option that would allow cannabis smoking.**

Cannabis smoke, like tobacco smoke, is a lung irritant and can pose significant risks to people who use and to those exposed to secondhand cannabis smoke. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), smoked cannabis, regardless of how it is smoked, can harm lung tissues and cause scarring and damage to small blood vessels. Cannabis smoke contains the same fine particulate matter found in tobacco smoke that can cause heart attacks. Cannabis smoke contains many of the cancer-causing substances found in tobacco smoke and has been shown to cause testicular cancer.

There are over 7,000 chemicals found in secondhand smoke, with hundreds of them known toxins and nearly 70 of them known to cause cancer. Cannabis smoke contains many of the same cancer-causing substances found in tobacco smoke and it does not respect boundaries, seeping through light fixtures, wall electric outlets, ceiling crawl spaces, and doorways into all areas of a building.

Furthermore, permitting cannabis smoking compromises highly effective smoke-free laws and protections for workers, normalizes smoking, undermining years of work to reduce smoking and leaves our residents exposed to secondhand smoke.

Ventilation systems simply do not protect anyone from the carcinogens found in secondhand smoke. The Surgeon General has concluded separating people who smoke from those who don't, cleaning the air, and ventilating buildings cannot eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke. In fact, the operation of a heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system can distribute secondhand smoke throughout a building.

There are no engineering approaches, including ventilation and air cleaning, that can fully eliminate the risk of secondhand smoke exposure. The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), is the organization that develops engineering standards for building ventilation systems. ASHRAE bases its ventilation standard for acceptable indoor air quality on an environment that is completely free from secondhand tobacco smoke, secondhand cannabis smoke, and emissions from electronic smoking devices. ASHRAE holds the position that the only means of avoiding health effects and eliminating indoor smoke exposure is to ban all smoking activity inside and near buildings.

Santa Cruz can and must do better by working to implement comprehensive smoke-free policies in all the spaces where our community works and plays. I urge you to protect our residents from the health hazards of secondhand smoke by ensuring any cannabis consumption lounge remains 100% smokefree.

Sincerely,



Jen Grand-Lejano

Senior Government Relations Director, Northern California & Grant Program
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

To the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

Regarding: (Agenda Item #11 Cannabis Consumption Lounges)

I am a pediatric nurse practitioner and Adolescent Health Director in Santa Cruz. I have been working in this community for the past 7 years. In my time as an adolescent medical provider, I have seen the significant impacts of potent THC products on my patients. I am writing as someone on the front lines who is seeing this impact directly, and to point out that the products on the market today are vastly different than the ones sold 10 or 20 years ago. In the 90s cannabis products had roughly 5% THC, today my patients are consuming products with 80 and 90% THC. With cannabis being legal on the state level but not at the federal level, we are unable to quickly and comprehensively study the effects of these highly potent products. However, in the research that has been done, we now have substantial evidence that frequent use of cannabis increases risks of psychosis, including schizophrenia among adolescent and young adults. It also increases risks of depressive disorders, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. There is an increased risk of overdose injuries. And yet there are substantial gaps in regulation, despite the exponential growth and access to these more potent products.

I have seen this with my patients. A 14-year-old with uncontrolled vomiting due to cannabis hyperemesis syndrome, a result of chronic cannabis use. A 15-year-old with early onset psychosis who began smoking with his brother at age 12. A 13-year-old with treatment resistant depression who smokes 'dabs,' (a highly potent form of THC) multiple times per day. My patients tell me that they learn about cannabis from their friends and social media. And it has been documented that most of the information on social media is promoting cannabis rather than offering warnings about potential risks. Given the discrepancy in product marketing versus public health messaging, there is a strong misperception about the health consequences of using these highly potent products. When asked, many of my patients believe cannabis is not addictive, even though it has been documented that roughly 3 million people meet criteria for a cannabis addiction. Many who use cannabis report they prefer to use cannabis to treat their anxiety, depression, or sleep problems, because it was recommended by a friend, a social media post, or 'someone in the industry.'

And though cannabis can have substantial health benefits for certain health conditions, recommendations for use to treat ailments should be left to medical professionals, not dispensary sales reps. Those of us who have been trained are working upstream as these products evolve and become more potent than the public health data can keep up with. At our clinic, we are working to come up with cannabis withdrawal medication protocol, using limited data, because patients have such significant symptoms when trying to quit. I strongly agree with this quote by Doctor Yasmin Hurd, "Until we do research on the drastically transformed cannabis in all its forms, I think putting them under the umbrella of a safe, legal drug is wrong," she said. "It's misleading at best and dangerous at worst."

When asked, 99% of my patients who use cannabis report getting it from a dispensary. When I probe, they say their 'friend' or 'source' is buying from a dispensary, marking it up and selling it to young people. So, though it is not legal for individuals under the age of 21 years old, the presence of these dispensaries, and the products they sell in our community are having a direct impact on our youth. To ignore this impact would be irresponsible. In light of these concerns, I ask the following:

- Vote against cannabis lounges until more research is done on potential harms of these products, and more regulations are in place to keep our community safe.
- If you move forward with approval then at the very least, cap the potency of products allowed to be consumed in the lounges.
- Require safety warning labels based on the evidence available.
- Limit the zoning regulations to allow for the fewest lounges possible to limit access and normalization of the use of products.

Let's prioritize health over profits.

Nadia Al-Lami

If you'd like to learn more, please see my recent Op-Ed from Lookout.

<https://lookout.co/cannabis-lounges-pose-a-risk-to-the-health-of-santa-cruz-county-youth-the-board-of-supervisors-should-vote-no/>

From: [Jennifer Kressman](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Cannabis Lounge -vote no plea (Help our youth)
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 4:36:02 PM

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Dear Board,

My daughter is 26. At 21 years of age she was hospitalized for cannabis induced psychosis for 6 weeks - and we were told by psychiatrist it was an 'epidemic.'

She was hospitalized for 2 months. It triggered severe mental illness.

That year, 5 other classmates from her local high school were also hospitalized. For the same!

5 years later my 19 year old son is currently 19 and refuses treatment - he is homeless and is experiencing cannabis induced psychosis.

He was given a cannabis med card in July 2024 by a Web MD while he was in psychosis.

The message that cannabis is not a threat to the mental health of our under 25 year old brains is dangerous.

-95% of inpatient calls to the Amen (neurology/ psych clinic in Walnut Creek) are for cannabis induced psychosis.

The US Surgeon General in 2019 released a warning to our country regarding cannabis and under 25 year old brains.

The UK and Canada have done research which concludes that -
10-% of people who experience alcohol induced psychosis develop Schizophrenia

vs.

35% of people who experience cannabis induced psychosis develop Schizophrenia

The inability to get out adult children a 5150- is heartbreaking. Despite SB43 - we still do not acknowledge this Senate Bill for 'gravely ill' to include drug induced psychosis- Even though it has been passed. Santa CRIZ MERTY said to me we won't be doing that until 2027!!!! My son is currently unable to get mental crisis intervention- but he can continue to be able to get legally high on cannabis with 38% THC.

Cannabis with high THC changes brain structure and has been shown to cause Schizophrenia

and Bipolar disorder to be triggered.

A latent gene is turned on! Brain changes and prefrontal cortex changes.

Dopamine levels cause severe mental impairment and illness.

I beg you- allow and encourage lounges that young people can frequent WITHOUT cannabis.

Our city already decriminalized mushrooms and they are advertised in back of Goodtimes at a church on River St.

I grew up here, knew it would be hard to raise kids - but I did not know it would threaten their future and lives and mental health in the way it has.

Vote no.

Public spaces with love and care for the message it sends to our youth and young adults and keep us safe from the spread of widely available legal drugs that can harm our brains.

Please contact El Camino Behavioral Health and ask for input from their psychiatrists- or Dr. Amen.

Or Dr. Borchert, local psychiatrist from UCSF.

Gather data- get the latest information. Visit a support group for mental health care givers.

My support group has over 5 young men with Schizophrenia that was said to be triggered by cannabis (per their psychiatrist).

Our lives are forever changed. Please participate in real ways to better our overall mental health.

Thank you,
Jennifer Kressman



<https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/addiction-and-substance-misuse/advisory-on-marijuana-use-and-developing-brain/index.html>

So much more out there — UC Davis published white paper about this as well.

Check out Three Moms in the Trenches Podcast on cannabis:

[SZ 3 Moms Episode 11 -Marijuana and Schizophrenia - Friends or Foes?](#)

SZ 3 Moms Episode 11 -Marijuana and Schizophrenia - Friends or Foes?

By Schizophrenia: Three Moms in the Trenches

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Cannabis lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 1:47:42 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I understand that the topic of cannabis lounges will be on the agenda for your meeting tomorrow. I would like to register my opposition to such a proposal.

Cannabis dispensaries are already much too plentiful in our County, especially in the unincorporated area where I live. The lounge concept sends the wrong message about how cannabis should be treated and will result in undesirable results such as increases in driving while under the influence and abuse disorders.

The increased potency of cannabis these days along with delivery methods that seem innocuous (edibles, etc) mean that people will be much less able and less likely to regulate their consumption before getting on the road. It is therefore not equivalent to a wine or other alcohol tasting room.

This is decidedly not the direction that I, or anyone else I know, wants for our community.

Please vote no on this proposal and discontinue pursuit of anything similar.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Price

[REDACTED] Santa Cruz

From: [Lisa Margiotta](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Cannabis Lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 1:53:48 PM

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Dear Board,

I am writing this email in opposition of the approval of cannabis lounges in SC County. cannabis is a huge problem in our teens today. I have several friends with young adults that have psychosis from smoking too much. It's really scary. It has changed their personalities and mental health.

Cannabis is rampant in the schools and kids think it's ok since it's legal for adults. It affects the young growing brain much more. Please consider our youth and how this would impact them. It would be more visible and available and acceptable. Let's protect them. Why is this necessary for adults to have a place to smoke? Is it money? I am urging you to vote NO on cannabis lounges. Protect our children!

Thank you,
Lisa - mom of a teen

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Dr. Susan Gyn](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Cannabis lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 2:50:45 PM

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Vote NO on cannabis lounges tomorrow



9:54 AM (4 hours ago)



Dr. Susan Gyn <[REDACTED]>



It has come to my attention that the Board of Supervisors is considering establishment of cannabis lounges in our county. My personal and professional experience with cannabis (I am a retired OB-GYN in Santa Cruz) indicates that this SHOULD NOT OCCUR. The health consequences of chronic use show an amotivational syndrome associated with early and chronic use of marijuana as well as other effects described by Nadia Al-Lami in her article to you.



Santa Cruz County Friday Night Live Partnership Youth Council

1/23/2025

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
701 Ocean Street, Room 500
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

We are youth representatives of the Santa Cruz County Friday Night Live Partnership Youth Council. Friday Night Live (FNL) engages youth as leaders, advocates, and resources to influence positive changes in our community. As FNL youth leaders, we learn about the ways the environment influences ours and our families' current and future health. We look for opportunities to change our community environments to be places that promote our health and wellbeing. This is why we want to share our concerns about potential upcoming changes to local policies related to Cannabis Consumption Lounges.

We reviewed California Healthy Kids Survey data from 2019 to 2023 and saw a decrease in the perception of harm of cannabis use among students in Santa Cruz County. Most noticeably, we identified a 7% decrease in the perception of harm of cannabis use among 7th grade students. We have learned from our prevention projects that increased normalization of and exposure to age restricted substances, like cannabis, can lead to more of our peers using cannabis. Education is just one way to prevent youth use and promote safe communities. Many more aspects of Cannabis Consumption Lounges raise concerns for us as community members.

Exposure and Training

- We believe that every employee has the right to safe working conditions. Cannabis smoking exposes employees to secondhand and thirdhand smoke impacting their health. Employees will need increased training to ensure safe consumption, recognize overconsumption, and implement harm reduction best practices.

Public Health and Safety

- We recognize the security measures used by dispensaries to limit underage sales, there is a lack of effective mechanisms to monitor cannabis sellers, making it difficult to ensure compliance with existing regulations. The alcohol industry has both minor decoy operations and programs like our own Responsible Alcohol Merchant Awards program that help merchants protect against underage sales.

- Unlike the alcohol industry, cannabis lacks a TRACE like program (Target Responsibility for Alcohol Connected Emergencies) to investigate and address alcohol related incidents. This absence limits the ability to trace incidents, hold establishments accountable, and implement preventive measures, undermining public safety and efforts to address cannabis related issues.
- Cannabis lounges could lead to increased impaired driving incidents, as patrons may leave these establishments under the influence of cannabis. Field tests are not always reliable to assess cannabis impairment. This poses a significant threat to public safety on our roads.

Costs, Resources, and Limits

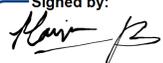
- Our community could see increased costs to emergency rooms, healthcare systems, law enforcement agencies, and court system. Ensuring proper enforcement of regulations surrounding Cannabis Lounges would place a burden on local law enforcement and public resources, diverting attention from other critical community needs.
- Cannabis affects people differently. With such high levels of THC and latent affects of some products on the market, there is a risk of someone overconsuming and not feeling the effects until later. Limiting the amount of THC and number of products consumed is important to prevent overconsumption.

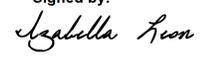
We as the Friday Night Live understand the presumed economic benefits and business opportunities the Cannabis Consumption Lounges may provide for the county. This change in the cannabis policy makes us think about what we as Santa Cruz County want to be known for. Do we want to be known for our Cannabis Consumption Lounges, or do we want to be known for our beautiful beaches and redwoods, our efforts to preserving the environment, and our commitment to a community health and wellness. If the board chooses to move forward with an ordinance to allow Cannabis Consumption Lounges, it is our recommendation that the board to prioritize public health and safety by limiting the number of licenses, mandating comprehensive training for staff, eliminating employee exposure to second and thirdhand smoke, implement methods for compliance checks, and reinvest revenue back into the community.

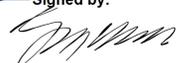
Thank you for your consideration of our concerns,

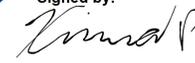
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Santa Cruz County Friday Night Live Partnership Youth Council

From: [Deborah McArthur](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: For our TEENS sake please do NOT continue loosening cannabis restrictions!
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 3:07:32 PM

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Greetings,

I am one of many parents concerned about Santa Cruz opening cannabis lounges and allowing more access points for cannabis distribution. These drugs are getting into the student population in sneaky and untraceable ways. Our students are becoming addicted and seriously harming themselves without a full understanding of the long-term effects of cannabis consumption in their developing years.

I urge you to vote NO on allowing cannabis lounges now. We need more regulations set in place to keep our kids safe.

Thank you,

Deborah McArthur

From: [Ilysa Iglesias](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Limiting the availability of Cannabis lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 3:41:35 PM

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Greetings and thank you for your time!

I just read through an excellent opinion article in Lookout (link below), and wanted to express my support for limiting the availability of Cannabis lounges (and the potency of the products contained therein) within our community. As the author points out, these products and the normalization of their use through lounges poses a risk to adolescents and Latinx communities in particular. As a mother to a little four year old, I too am concerned about what this exposure may mean for the health of my daughter and urge you to consider restricting the products and availability of lounges in our community.

Best regards,
Ilysa Iglesias

<https://lookout.co/cannabis-lounges-pose-a-risk-to-the-health-of-santa-cruz-county-youth-the-board-of-supervisors-should-vote-no/>

From: [Terri Buller](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: No on Cannabis Lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 2:46:04 PM

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Dear Board of Supervisors,

As a concerned citizen and mother of young adults, I would ask that you vote against cannabis lounges. There are many reasons that these lounges would not be good for our communities. Studies are showing how the use of cannabis is negatively affecting our youth, in ways that were not considered when cannabis was made legal. It is not the cannabis that we had in our youth. The THC levels are so much higher and are affecting our youth whose brains have not been developed enough to fight effects. I could go on and on about all the other reasons, but I believe that in such a decision you have fully researched the effects that these lounges will have in this ever increasing use of cannabis.

Please consider the many reasons for not having these lounges available to our community.

Thank you for your vote.

Sincerely,
Terri Buller

From: Kristen O'Connor
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: No to Cannabis Lounge!
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 4:48:40 PM

****CAUTION:This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hello Board of Supervisors,

I would like you to please consider voting NO on the cannabis lounge proposal for Santa Cruz. Currently, the youth and adolescent perception that cannabis poses risk or harm is lacking in our community and culture when I know firsthand the dangers and harms they pose to this population as an addiction RN who works with youth and adolescents who use cannabis and have cannabis use disorder.

With a cannabis dispensary already approved close to our local middle and high school, the visibility and commercialization of the cannabis industry is overwhelming our youth in Santa Cruz. Having another novel way for the cannabis to be present and visible as a “normal” café or lounge in our community should be paused.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kristen O'Connor RN, Certified Addiction Registered Nurse

Our Mission - To improve the health of our patients and the community and advocate the feminist goals of social, political, and economic equality.

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From: [Alison Allami](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: On site Cannabis Lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 1:32:26 PM

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We were very concerned to hear that the Board of Supervisors is considering a proposal to allow on-site cannabis lounges in our community. We are most worried about the detrimental effects that it could have on the youth in our county. It has come to our attention that cannabis is far more potent today than it was in the past, and that social media, etc., is promoting it without warning of the potential risks. Increased risk of psychosis, depressive disorders which could lead to suicide attempts are just a few examples of its detrimental effects. If we open these lounges, even though our youth cannot enter, it will increase the normalization of cannabis use in our area and lead youth to believe that it is a perfectly normal part of every day life and not worry about any potential side effects. In addition, cannabis lounges will increase the visibility of cannabis centers, especially if opened in other locations, which would increase the number of dispensary locations and increase the volume availability to youth through secondary sources.

We should not sacrifice the well being of our youth for the sake of profit. The job of government is to protect them. We strongly urge the Board to vote NO on this proposal.

Alison Al-Lami
Retired Teacher
Sattar Al- Lami
Retired Associate Professor

From: DeAnna Valencia
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Please vote no on Cannabis lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 2:15:56 PM

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Dear Board of supervisors of Santa Cruz

Please vote against allowing on-site cannabis consumption/smoking/vaping lounges in our community. Our young people already have too much access and visibility to cannabis and insufficient warning as to the life altering health risks using can cause. I'm a parent who has already lost one son to complications of mental illness and caring for another who had no idea doing what his friends did (smoking/vaping cannabis) would completely change his life and steal his dreams. I beg you to consider the future of our youth even as they are too ignorant to do so. Please use the voting power you have to do good.

DeAnna

M.B.O.M.T.
DeAnna Valencia



January 27, 2025

County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors
Governmental Center Building, Board Chambers
701 Ocean Street, Room 525
Santa Cruz, California

Dear County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors,

As you consider cannabis (marijuana and hemp) consumption lounges in Santa Cruz County, California, we offer the collective expertise of The Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility ([Responsibility.org](https://responsibility.org)) and The National Alliance to Stop Impaired Driving (NASID). Responsibility.org and NASID take no position on cannabis legalization, but we are dedicated to ensuring that cannabis policy/legislation includes strong provisions to **prevent impaired driving**. Additionally, **preventing underage cannabis consumption** must also be a priority.

Many states are also grappling with how to regulate new intoxicating hemp products, which contain psychoactive cannabinoids in concentrations high enough to cause impairing effects. While this letter does not delve further into intoxicating hemp products, Responsibility.org and NASID believe that legislation concerning these products should also include strong measures to combat impaired driving and underage consumption.

You have the unique opportunity and responsibility to proactively address the increased risks of wholly preventable crashes, deaths, and injuries caused by impaired driving and underage consumption.

About Responsibility.org and the National Alliance to Stop Impaired Driving (NASID):

For over 30 years, [Responsibility.org](https://responsibility.org) has led the fight to eliminate drunk driving and underage drinking. We are a national not-for-profit organization funded by the following leading distillers: Bacardi U.S.A., Inc.; Beam Suntory; Brown-Forman; Campari Group; Constellation Brands, Inc; DIAGEO; Edrington; Hotaling, Mast-Jägermeister US; Moët Hennessy USA; Ole Smoky; Pernod Ricard USA; and William and Grant & Sons. Responsibility.org has transformed countless lives through programs that bring individuals, families, and communities together to guide a lifetime of conversations around alcohol responsibility and to offer proven solutions to stop impaired driving.

NASID is a coalition established and led by [Responsibility.org](https://responsibility.org) to eliminate all forms of impaired driving, especially multiple substance impaired driving—driving while impaired by drugs and alcohol or a combination of drugs—through effective and proven measures such as DUI system reform, DUI detection, expanding drug testing, and improved use of data and technology. NASID membership includes stakeholders working in a public/private partnership to achieve these goals. Our members include law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, toxicologists, academics, safety advocates, and industry leaders. We also have “Ally” members who do not advocate or lobby but support our programmatic efforts. To learn more please visit www.NASID.org.

The Danger of Impaired Driving

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), traffic fatalities on US roads increased by 29% from 2013 to 2022, while drunk driving increased 34% during the same time period. NHTSA's latest data also shows that 42,514 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2022. Among those, 13,524 people died in drunk driving crashes—accounting for 32% of all fatalities. Additionally, 10,697 people were killed in crashes involving drugs, accounting for 25% of all traffic fatalities.

What's more, people driving impaired by multiple substances is on the rise. A 2020 NHTSA study of five trauma centers revealed that fatal and serious injuries involving alcohol and cannabis-impaired driving increased; 25 percent of these drivers had more than one substance in their systems. The danger of driving while impaired by cannabis is well-established, but evidence suggests that many members of the public do not understand the risks. In Washington, Colorado, and Oregon, there have been dramatic increases in drug-impaired and multiple substance impaired driving.

Detecting Drugs and Multiple Substance Impairment

Drug and multiple substance impaired drivers often go undetected and are underreported. Many state policies and protocols prevent drug testing if an impaired driver is at or above the legal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit. Drug use is often only investigated when alcohol is not an impairment factor or when observed impairment does not correspond with the driver's BAC level. Additionally, our nation has more than 70 years of science on the study of alcohol impairment. However, unlike alcohol, researchers have been unable to define a standard of impairment for cannabis.

Washington State data revealed multiple substance impairment was the most common type of impairment found among drivers involved in fatal crashes between 2008 and 2016 (Grondel et al., 2018). Among drivers involved in fatal crashes during this timeframe, 44 percent tested positive for two or more substances with alcohol and THC being the most common combination (Grondel et al., 2018). According to data reported by the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (RMHIDTA), in 2020 drivers involved in fatal crashes who tested positive for cannabis were more likely to test positive for multiple substances as opposed to cannabis alone. In fact, 24 percent of these drivers tested positive for cannabis and alcohol, 25 percent tested positive for cannabis and other drugs (no alcohol), and 13 percent tested positive for a combination of cannabis, alcohol, and other drugs (RMHIDTA, 2021).

How to Achieve Better DUI Detection

Drug Recognition Experts (DREs)—law enforcement officers trained to recognize impairment in drivers under the influence of drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol—are critical to helping identify and stop impaired driving. Ensuring your law enforcement agencies have the necessary number of trained DREs in place is important. Cannabis levels dissipate quickly in a person's system while impairment remains, highlighting the need for expedited testing to promptly gather essential information. Every state, but especially a state considering legalization of cannabis, should test for both drugs and alcohol among impaired drivers. This is a best practice that will lead to reduced recidivism, a better understanding of the issue, informed decision-making regarding policy and resource allocation, effective case disposition, and effective sentences tailored to offender supervision and treatment needs.

Strengthen DUI Laws

Effective laws that ensure traffic safety and prevent underage consumption issues include:

- Inclusion of cannabis and all impairing substances in the state's impaired driving and implied consent laws,
- Providing more tools to law enforcement, such as funding for training programs focusing on Standardized Field Sobriety Testing (SFST), Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement (ARIDE), and DRE instruction, to detect and respond to all forms of impaired driving,
- Improved testing and data collection efforts such as requiring alcohol and drug testing of all fatally injured and surviving drivers involved in fatal and serious injury crashes,
- Expedited testing (oral fluid field screening, electronic search warrants, and law enforcement phlebotomy),
- Administrative license revocation laws made specific to cannabis impairment,
- Expanded open container laws to include the various forms of cannabis available in the state,
- Enhanced laws for young drivers who's cognitive and driving skills are still developing by expanding the zero tolerance DUI-alcohol standard for people under 21 to also include cannabis. It is illegal to consume alcohol under 21 and then drive in every state. The same should be true for underage cannabis consumption and driving,
- Prohibition of cannabis use for people under the age of 21 (exceptions defined by state statute for medicinal use).

In 2021, The Federal Government expanded funding for state highway safety offices to address impaired driving. We urge you to implement the following programs to create the infrastructure needed to effectively address cannabis and multiple substance impaired driving along with drunk driving:

- [Specialized Law Enforcement Training \(SFST, ARIDE, and DREs\)](#);
- [Cannabis Impairment Detection Workshops \(Green Labs\)](#);
- [Expanded Drug Testing for Impaired Drivers](#);
- [Law Enforcement Phlebotomy](#);
- [Oral Fluid Roadside Test Collection](#);
- [Effective Technology \(e.g., electronic warrants\)](#);
- [Advanced Vehicle Technology](#);
- [Rideshare](#);
- [Improved Data Collection](#);
- [Treatment Courts](#); and
- [Monitoring Courts](#).



Responsibility.org and NASID stand ready to assist Santa Cruz County, California in its efforts to reduce cannabis impaired driving and underage consumption. Please contact us at Darrin.grondel@responsibility.org or Kelly.poulsen@responsibility.org for any assistance we can provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darrin T. Grondel".

Darrin T. Grondel, Ph.D.
Director, NASID
Senior Vice President, Traffic Safety
Responsibility.org

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly Poulsen".

Kelly Poulsen
Senior Vice President, Government Relations
Responsibility.org

From: [Kelly Poulsen](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Cc: [Darrin Grondel](#); [Gideon Blum](#)
Subject: Responsibility.org/NASID - In regard to cannabis consumption lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 2:09:48 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[image006.png](#)
[Responsibility.org NASID Cannabis Consumption Lounge Letter Santa Cruz Co.pdf](#)

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Dear County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors,

As you consider cannabis (marijuana and hemp) consumption lounges in Santa Cruz County, California, attached is a letter from The Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility ([Responsibility.org](#)) and The National Alliance to Stop Impaired Driving (NASID). Responsibility.org and NASID take no position on cannabis legalization, but we are dedicated to ensuring that cannabis policy/legislation includes strong provisions to **prevent impaired driving**. Additionally, **preventing underage cannabis consumption** must also be a priority.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our views. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Darrin Grondel (cc'd here) with any questions of if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,
Kelly

Kelly Poulsen
Senior Vice President for Government Relations
O: [\(202\) 355-1944](tel:(202)355-1944)
[Redacted]

