

To the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

Regarding: (Agenda Item #8 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.'

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:** [Brenda Armstrong](#)  
**To:** [Board Of Supervisors](#)  
**Subject:** Cannabis Lounge Recommendations  
**Date:** Monday, March 10, 2025 12:11:23 PM

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3/7/2025

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

**Subject: Concerns Regarding Cannabis Consumption Lounges and Impact on Public Safety**

Dear Chairperson Hernandez and Members of the Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to address my concerns regarding the establishment and operation of cannabis consumption lounges in our community. While such establishments present potential economic opportunities and provide a viable option for individuals and patients who do not have a legal space to consume cannabis, it is critical to consider implications on consumer safety, community well-being, and economic impacts. Thoughtful regulation and proactive policies are crucial to ensure these spaces are responsibly managed and integrated into our community.

#### **Recommended Policies for Consumer and Public Safety**

- **Mandatory Staff Training:** All staff at consumption lounges should undergo training based on the standards outlined by the Cannabis Licensing Office to serve as the baseline for ensuring staff competency in managing consumer and community safety.
- **Patron Education:** Guide responsible and safe consumption, including titration: the gradual adjustment of dosage to achieve desired effects while minimizing risks.
- **Safe Transportation Options:** Consumption lounges should be required to provide transportation information, including designated driver services and safe ride options, to ensure patrons do not drive under the influence.
- **Social Norms Campaign:** A public awareness campaign should be launched to promote safe rides and prevent impaired driving.
- **Pilot Program Restrictions:** Limit the number of lounges in the pilot project in the first year, increasing annually. A gradual expansion will allow for a thorough assessment of the program's feasibility and community impact.
- **Quarterly Compliance Visits:** During the pilot phase, the Cannabis Licensing Office (CLO) should conduct quarterly visits to support compliance, provide education, and monitor the program's successes and challenges. This will allow the board to review the program and recommend changes to support safe and successful businesses.

## Ensuring Safety

The safety of patrons, staff, and the community must be a top priority in the operation of cannabis consumption lounges. Effective staff training is essential to support consumer safety. The CLO, funded to manage licensing components, should be directed to develop a standardized training program in partnership with Public Health and Cannabis Businesses, covering the following components:

- **Dosage and Titration:** Train staff and consumers on safe consumption practices, including the "start low, go slow" approach to dosing, and inform consumers about product potency and effects.
- **Monitoring Consumption:** Ensure staff monitor consumption, recognize signs of overconsumption, and offer assistance when necessary. Implement video surveillance to support compliance and ensure patron safety.
- **Safe Ride Options:** Encourage or provide safe ride services to patrons to prevent impaired driving.

In approving lounges, the cost of development and management of standardized training, issuance of certificates, and monitoring of certification should be considered.

## Community Well-Being

Cannabis lounges must operate without compromising the quality of life for residents. Several considerations must be considered:

- **Driving Under the Influence (DUI):** In 2022, Santa Cruz County had the second-highest rate of impaired driving in California. The Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) reported this resulted in 319 victims killed or injured and 1,678 DUI Arrests. Cannabis consumption lounges must take proactive steps to prevent DUIs by providing clear policies and enforcing consequences for violators.
- **DUI Place of Last Drink Survey for Santa Cruz County** participants identified a bar or restaurant as their place of last drink, reporting 40% in 2023 and dropping to 32% in 2024. One significant change during this time is CA Alcoholic Beverage Control mandated training for all on-sale outlets. They approved a curriculum and monitor and track the compliance of individuals through ABC staff and local enforcement.
- **The California Office of Traffic Safety** states that people who drive immediately after using cannabis may increase their risk of getting into a crash by 25 to 35 percent. The impairing effect rises rapidly and remains for some time. These effects can be delayed if the cannabis is ingested rather than smoked. [Drug-Impaired Driving | Office of Traffic Safety](#)
- **DUI Prevention: Protocols:** Similar to alcohol-serving establishments, cannabis lounges should implement strict protocols, including clear signage about impaired driving and information about rideshare options. All patrons should sign a waiver acknowledging the prohibition of driving under the influence. Licensees should have business policies to temporarily or permanently bar patrons who fail to consume responsibly or who violate other posted rules.
- **Robust Safety Measures:** Controlled access, strict age verification, compliance with ventilation and odor mitigation standards, and security management plans are vital to minimizing disruptions to the community.
- **Operating Hours:** Limit operating hours to reduce traffic, avoid conflicts with children's school schedules, and minimize late-night disturbances.

## Economic and Community Impacts

Cannabis lounges have the potential to contribute economically, but their associated costs must be carefully considered:

- **Licensee Training Cost:** A comprehensive training certification program should be developed, with the County responsible for approving content and tracking compliance. The costs of training and monitoring should be accounted for in business plans.
- **Health Service Impacts:** Increased cannabis use may result in higher demands on emergency and behavioral health services. Cannabis consumption has been linked to adverse health outcomes, including addiction, mental health challenges, and impaired cognition ([Source](#)).
- **Monitoring and Enforcement Cost:** Ongoing costs include staff training, business plan reviews, site visits, and compliance monitoring. The financial implications of impaired driving also need to be factored into the overall cost-benefit analysis of cannabis lounges.

By adopting robust regulations, and safety measures, we can foster a responsible framework for this growing industry. Economic development must be balanced with consumer safety and community well-being.

I urge the Board to incorporate these recommendations into its policy framework. With careful planning, cannabis consumption lounges can contribute positively to both the local economy and community values.

Thank you for considering these concerns.

Sincerely,

Brenda Armstrong  
Felton, CA 95018

Valerie Leveroni Corral  
WAMM Phytotherapies  
Executive Director

D'Angelo "Cricket" Roberto  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Jozee Roberto  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Jennifer O'Brien Rojo  
Felton, CA 95018

**From:** [Frederick C. Lee](#)  
**To:** [Board Of Supervisors](#)  
**Cc:** [Fifth District](#)  
**Subject:** Marijuana Bar in Boulder Creek, CA  
**Date:** Sunday, March 9, 2025 4:31:27 PM

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

Greetings:

It took America DECADES to get weaned off of tobacco products (since the Surgeon General declared tobacco use dangerous in 1964).

Waikiki Beach had a serious problem with discarded butts on its beaches, even though there's a strict ordinance against smoking on the beach.

Boulder Creek doesn't need another headache screwing up its bucolic scene, akin to Northern Exposure's Cicely, Alaska which are unfortunately diminishing.

Keep Boulder Creek pristine. Keep the pot-heads out.

Regards,

Frederick C. Lee

[REDACTED]

Boulder Creek, CA 95006-8509

[REDACTED]

**From:** [luci D](#)  
**To:** [Board Of Supervisors](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment for Ordinance Amending Local Cannabis Policy Item #8  
**Date:** Monday, March 10, 2025 10:41:35 AM

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3/8/25

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

701 Ocean Street, Room 500

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Hello, my name is Luciana Dodson and I'm here because I am a concerned highschool student as well as a concerned driver.

According to Crash rankings in 2022 Santa Cruz was 2nd in the state for impaired driving and 3rd for under 21 impaired driving. This is incredibly concerning statistics, and I believe that the Cannabis Consumption lounges will only increase that number.

This personally is very important to me because I've seen the negative effects of cannabis use on my peers. I've seen students and tourists smoking and driving, I've seen early weed addiction consume the lives of my closest friends, and I've seen the long term effects in my family members. Close friends have detailed to me the life changing consequences that crashes involving impaired driving have left them with.

I believe the cannabis consumption lounge will have a negative effect on our community. Effective regulations on things such as overserving, mandatory sober drivers, and the locations of these lounges are imperative for our communities health. I believe that effective measures like proper TRACE programs for cannabis, mandatory staff training, community outreach programs, and regular impaired driving checkpoints are effective ways to mitigate the negative consequences. Ultimately, though, I do not believe we are prepared to handle the consequences of this policy amendment.

Thank you for hearing my concerns,

Luci Dodson

Links

<https://www.ots.ca.gov/media-and-research/crash-rankings-results/>



**Santa Cruz County Friday Night Live Partnership Youth Council**

3/9/2025

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

Dear Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors,

As high school students, getting a drivers license is one of those honored rights of passage to gain independence. We take drivers education classes in the graduated drivers license program that prepares us to hit the road safely and responsibly. But we need our policy makers to ensure our roads are safe for us to use as well. In 2022, Santa Cruz County saw more than 1600 DUI arrests ([California Office of Traffic Safety](#)). As you consider changes to local cannabis policy and vote on whether or not to permit onsite consumption at cannabis dispensaries and cannabis farms, we want to, again, share our concerns about the impacts to our community.

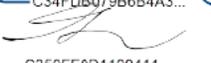
We are members of the Santa Cruz County Friday Night Live Partnership Youth Council where youth are leaders, advocates, and resources to influence positive changes in our community. We attend schools across Santa Cruz County. We're interested in the factors that contribute to youth substance use and how we can make changes to prevent use and increase protective factors. Research shows that the closer cannabis retailers are to where youth live, learn, and play, the more likely they are to use earlier in life ([Examining Associations Between Licensed and Unlicensed Outlet Density and Cannabis Outcomes From Preopening to Postopening of Recreational Cannabis Outlets - PubMed](#)). In January, we wrote a letter to the Board of Supervisors that was read during public comment expressing our concerns over the changes to local cannabis policy to allow Cannabis Consumption Lounges. Our top concerns were around impaired driving, youth access and exposure, gaps in compliance, and normalization of cannabis use leading to a reduced perception of harm among youth. Since then, we learned that cannabis farms would be allowed to offer onsite consumption and sale of cannabis products at farmstands. This increase in the number of places where people can buy cannabis raises more concerns over normalization and reduced perceptions of harm among youth who will now see cannabis as accessible as strawberries, honey, and other non-age restricted produce.

Further, onsite consumption concerns us as cannabis use can impair safe driving. According to the CDC, cannabis use can slow reaction time, distort perception, and impair

ability to make decisions and physical coordination ([Impaired Driving Facts | Impaired Driving | CDC](#)). The California Office of Traffic Safety states that people who drive immediately after using cannabis may increase their risk of getting into a crash by 25 to 35 percent. The impairing effect increases rapidly and lingers. The method of use can delay effects too whether cannabis is smoked or ingested ([Drug-Impaired Driving | Office of Traffic Safety](#)). The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration conducted a study where they looked at more than 4,000 drivers who were seriously injured in crashes and found that 25% tested positive for cannabis ([Update to Special Reports on Traffic Safety during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency: Fourth Quarter Data \[Traffic Safety Facts\]](#)). Impaired driving does not just impact drivers. Passengers and youth are impacted themselves. According to the 2012-2023 California Healthy Kids Survey, 30% of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students in Santa Cruz County have ridden in the car driven by someone who had been using substances ([Santa Cruz County 2123\\_Sec\\_CHKS.pdf](#)). The risk is too high for our friends and peers.

Local policies can reduce impaired driving and reinforce the age restriction and potential harms of cannabis to youth. Some policies include training servers on how to notice when someone is intoxicated or impaired, establish clear monitoring policies for consumer behavior and intervention strategies that prevent impaired driving, and increase law enforcement training in cannabis impairment detection through Drug Recognition Expert training and oral swab testing. Businesses can provide ride share and sober driver options to consumers onsite and promote social media campaigns designed to amplify safe ride options and prevent impaired driving.

**Thank** you for considering our concerns and prioritizing the health and safety of youth and our community.

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Signed by:   
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SCCFNLP Youth Council



March 11, 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 and consumption on site at cannabis farms 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](https://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, the number of 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](mailto:Darrin.grondel@responsibility.org) or [Kelly.poulsen@responsibility.org](mailto: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