

11. Consider options to allow cannabis consumption at retail locations and potential cannabis business tax revisions related to consumption and non-cannabis goods ()



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: County Administrative Office

Subject: Options for Consideration to Allow Cannabis Consumption at Retail Location and Cannabis Tax Code Revision

Meeting Date: January 28, 2025

Formal Title: Consider options to allow cannabis consumption at retail locations and potential cannabis business tax revisions related to consumption and non-cannabis goods

Recommended Actions

- 1) Provide staff direction on potential code amendments to allow cannabis consumption at existing retail sites;
- 2) Provide staff direction on potential code amendments regarding cannabis business tax application to cannabis lounges and ancillary product sales; and
- 3) Direct staff to return with a scheduled public hearing to consider amendments to Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC) Chapter 7.130 and Chapter 4.06.

Executive Summary

On December 10, 2024, the Cannabis Licensing Office (CLO) provided proposed amendments to SCCC Chapter 7.130 (cannabis dispensary licenses) to allow consumption at existing retail sites based on the Board motion on June 4, 2024. While considering the proposed amendments the Board directed the CLO to consider ancillary sales, cannabis business tax (CBT) sales in retail versus lounges, taxation on products consumed in lounges, and ways to extend the opportunity to have consumption lounges in more of the existing retailers. This letter is intended to provide the Board context and options related to their direction.

Discussion

On November 14, 2023, the Board considered cannabis cultivation issues related to sustainable growth, economic development, and responsible cannabis regulation, in alignment with the 2023 Sustainability Plan updates. The Board discussed the matter and directed the CLO to conduct public meetings across various districts to collect public opinion on several cannabis related ideas, including onsite consumption at existing retail business.

The Board instructed the CLO to facilitate community discussions on potential options to gain a deeper understanding of public concerns before considering any changes to the existing cannabis ordinance.

The CLO presented a report of the results of the listening sessions to the Board on June 4, 2024. The report prompted a discussion that resulted in the Board directing the CLO to draft ordinances related to the contents of the November 14, 2023, agenda item. This report is limited to consumption at existing retail businesses.

Retail Cannabis Business Licensing Code Background

The Board approved the first ordinance which allowed licensing of medicinal cannabis dispensaries in August 2016. This ordinance allowed for 13 existing medicinal dispensaries the opportunity to obtain a business license at their current locations. These 13 businesses were grandfathered into legality at their physical locations. This ordinance established the location requirements which would allow for a dispensary to relocate.

The location requirements were restricted to certain commercial zones and included setbacks to schools, alcohol and drug treatment facilities, other dispensaries, and residentially zoned parcels. The setbacks established mimicked recently adopted state laws known as the Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act, which was composed of AB 266, AB 243 and SB 643 in 2015. These location requirements allowed dispensaries the opportunity to move into 41 parcels. 32 of the parcels are grouped near Dominican Hospital, near Sutter Maternity and Surgery Center, and northern 41st Avenue adjacent to Café Cruz in District 1, as shown on Attachment A. The nine remaining parcels are located south of the Aptos Village and adjacent to the hotel located off of State Park and Highway 1 in District 2, as shown on Attachment B.

The grouping of these parcels is important because our code does not allow dispensaries to be located within 600 feet of each other. Of the 41 parcels that are eligible for a dispensary there are only six locations which a dispensary could truly move to at the time the ordinance was adopted.

In April of 2017, the Board adopted a revised the dispensary ordinance to allow for one additional dispensary, with a well establish history of compassionate care work, to obtain a business license.

In October 2017, the Board adopted another revision to the dispensary ordinance meant to align County Code with State law changes enacted with the passage of Proposition 64 in 2016. These changes allowed for adult-use sales in addition to medicinal sales at cannabis dispensaries. Additional changes were made in the same vein in August 2018.

In March 2019, the Board adopted revisions which removed the original licensing language, various technical changes to better reflect state laws, and recommendations from the CLO and Sheriff's Office regarding security and license processing. Following these revisions dispensaries began being referred to as cannabis retailers. In May 2019, the Board adopted revisions to the setbacks for retailers if findings could be made that the general public benefit would outweigh concerns regarding intensity of use, land use compatibility, and public health and safety. This exception language and approval pathway was further revised to include a public notification and appeal process in August 2022.

In November 2022, the Board adopted minor changes which allowed for retailers located anywhere within the County to deliver to unincorporated areas and various non-substantive changes including the removal of dispensary and replacement with retailer to County Code.

These changes illustrate the iterative nature of the cannabis business licensing code. Since the inception of the cannabis code the Board acknowledged this process would continually evolve.

Options to Extend the Opportunity to Have Consumption Lounges

The Board directed staff to identify ways to extend the opportunity to have consumption lounges at more of the existing retailers. A concern was raised that some retailers do not have the space to accommodate a consumption lounge and the ability to obtain a lease on an adjacent property is out of their control. Below are three options for consideration and the potential effects of each.

Option 1: Allow retailers the option of pursuing on-site consumption either within their existing licensed space or at an adjoining commercial parcel to the existing site.

Potential Effects of Option 1:

- All of the existing retailers have the ability to allow for consumption at their existing licensed location with the exception of the two locations in the San Lorenzo Valley.
 - Both of those retailers could pursue leasing an adjacent location and one of them already has secured a lease on an adjacent space.
- The size of the consumption lounges would vary based on the current licensed site.
- The spaces used for consumption will have to be retrofitted to comply with smokefree workplace considerations.

Option 2: Allow retailers the option of pursuing on-site consumption either within their existing licensed space, at an adjoining commercial parcel to the existing site, or at any parcel currently allowed within Code and not excluded by the 600-foot retailer to retailer location exception.

Potential Effects of Option 2:

- 39 non-adjacent parcels (there were 41 parcels when the original ordinance passed but two retailers have relocated) would be eligible for use as a cannabis lounges.
- This could potentially double the number of retailers within the unincorporated county.
 - A lounge is a retail point of sale and consumers (similar to a bar or restaurant with regard to wine sales) could purchase cannabis and take the left-overs home with them.
- This may disproportionately impact four retailers located near Dominican Hospital and northern 41st Avenue in District 1.
 - They would likely face increased competition as 30 of the 39 potential parcels where a lounge could be located are within these areas.

Option 3: Allow retailers the option of pursuing on-site consumption either within their existing licensed space or at commercial locations similar to those allowed for restaurants and bars.

Potential Effects of Option 3:

- This could potentially double the number of retailers within the unincorporated county.
- This would provide the greatest flexibility for retailers to choose a desirable location to establish a cannabis lounge.
- Restaurants and bars can be located within the Neighborhood Commercial (C-1), Community Commercial (C-2), Workplace Flex (C-3), Commercial Services (C-4), Tourist Commercial (C-T), and the Professional and Administrative Offices (PA) zone districts.
 - To allow consumption lounges would require amendments to chapter 13.10.332 of County Code to allow for these uses.

- o These businesses would be subject to the commercial use permit process.
- This would result in a more costly process to establish a cannabis lounge and likely limit the potential development of these businesses.

If the Board would like to continue pursuing allowing cannabis consumption the Board needs to provide staff direction on this topic. Options two and three presented above may lead to doubling the amount of retail outlets within the County. Limitation may be placed on cannabis lounges to mitigate the effect of these additional points of sale on existing businesses. The location of these additional businesses may disproportionately impact the existing retailers located within the Urban Services Line as most potential additional locations will be located there. In addition, there are several zoning and CEQA considerations to be analyzed if either of these options are pursued. Staff anticipates that pursuing either option two or three would be up to a year-long process.

Some of our existing retailers may not agree with the staff's analysis that all of the retailers located outside of the San Lorenzo Valley have the ability to pursue a cannabis lounge at their location. This conclusion was reached while staff discussed lounges with retail businesses during the annual inspection process in November and December 2024. The two retailers with the smallest square footage are planning on pursuing a lounge without expanding into an adjacent space. Based on those discussions and the size of the other retailers a cannabis lounge, within the existing site, is an option for every retailer outside of the San Lorenzo Valley. Some retailers do not think it's a viable business model, others are not going to pursue this because of liability concerns, and some retailers oppose this opportunity because they feel it could place them at a competitive disadvantage if they choose not to pursue a lounge.

Cannabis Business Tax Code Analysis

The Board directed staff to consider options that could impact taxes from ancillary sales, CBT sales in retail versus lounges, and different taxation rates on products consumed in lounges. Staff worked with County Counsel to analyze how the Board can amend our voter approved cannabis business tax code, SCCC Chapter 4.06. The options presented below identify how the Board can amend the code to address the concerns they previously raised.

Option 1: Define ancillary products

Pursuant to the authority granted under SCCC Chapter 4.06.330(B) the Board may interpret or clarify the methodology of the tax, or any definition applicable to the tax. Under this provision the Board may add a definition of ancillary products. By defining ancillary products as those products derived from cannabis or containing cannabis that would allow retailers the ability to sell non-cannabis goods (i.e. coffee, snacks, shirts, pipes) without those goods being subject to the cannabis business tax, in a similar fashion to non-cannabis retail stores.

Option 2: Define a tax rate for cannabis lounges

The Board has been granted the authority to set cannabis business tax rates anywhere between zero and ten percent of gross receipts. This authority is defined in SCCC Chapter 4.06.070(A). The Board can therefore set any rate within that range for cannabis lounge sales. The lounge rate does not have to align with the retail sales rates. Therefore, the Board could pursue different tax rates for products consumed on-site versus those sold via a retail.

These options could be pursued independently or jointly at any time. These options

provide the Board a method for removing non-cannabis goods from the cannabis business tax and allowing for different tax rates for cannabis goods consumed on-site versus sold via retail store. Option one also provides cannabis retailers a level playing field to pursue non-cannabis sales, which will increase if the Board allows for consumption lounges. Staff can prepare either or both of these options in conjunction with any direction the Board provides in regard to cannabis lounges.

Financial Impact

The addition of consumption lounges would create some additional staff work but that work level will vary greatly depending on which option the Board pursues. Option one would include minimal efforts to finalize the ordinance while options two and three could likely take upward of a year to finalize. Staff work associated with tax changes is negligible. If the Board pursues consumption lounges staff work will increase particularly at the outset when plans, ventilation systems, workplace safety and other items will have to be reviewed. New licenses or license amendments would need to be processed for any retailer adding a consumption lounge and would likely be billed on time spent, similar to how we currently approach issuing new licenses and processing license amendments.

As retailers are inspected annually with their license renewal, lounges would also require annual inspections and thus, annual licensing fees will need to be assessed if the Board pursues any of the options. If lounges were operated at separate distinct locations as mentioned in options two and three changes to the Unified Fee Schedule would also be required to address these new types of businesses. Potential changes could include a fee-based system that is based on the amount of inspections or based on square feet of lounge space.

Strategic Initiatives

Operational Plan - Dynamic Economy

Submitted By:

Carlos Palacios, County Administrative Officer

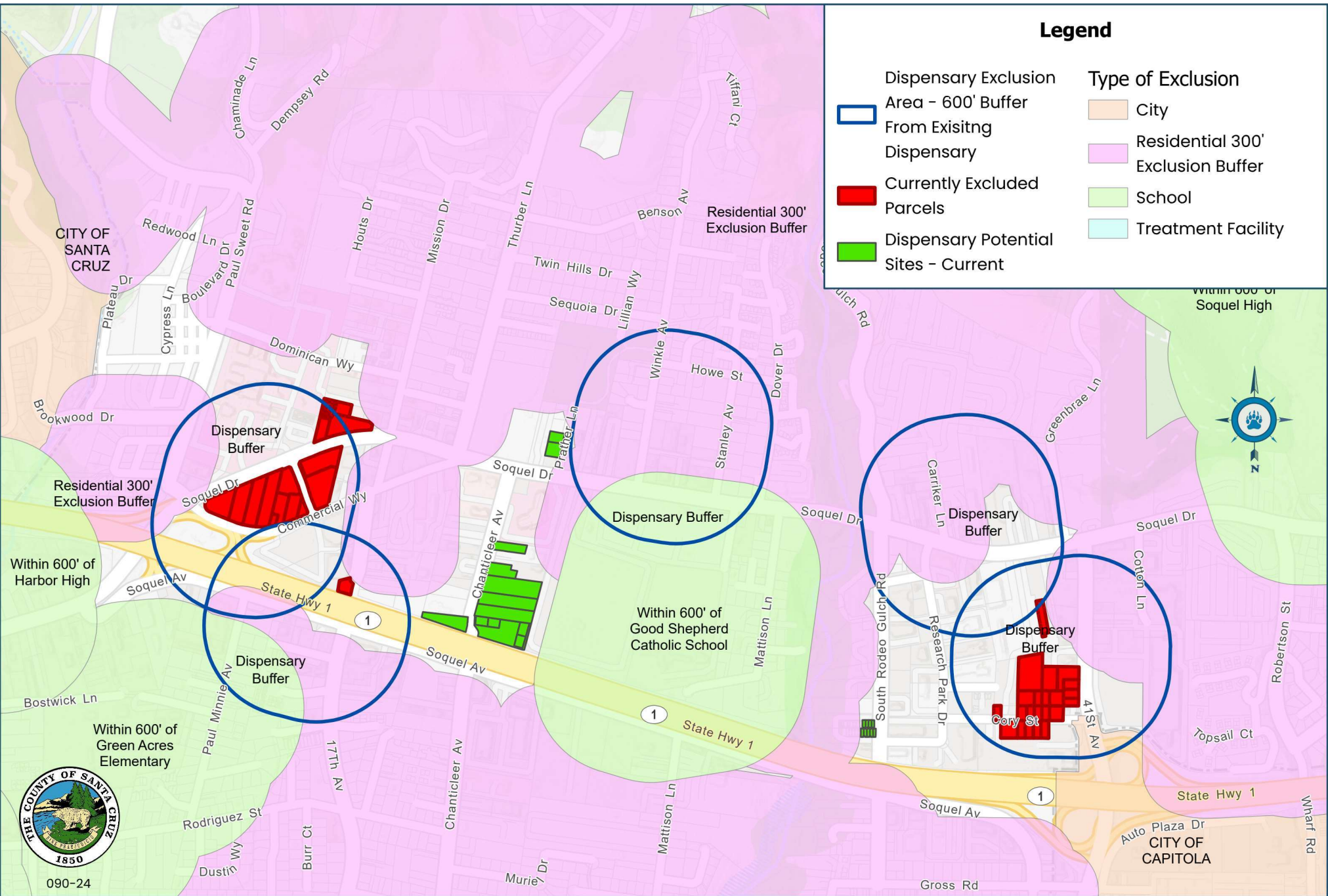
Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Administrative Officer

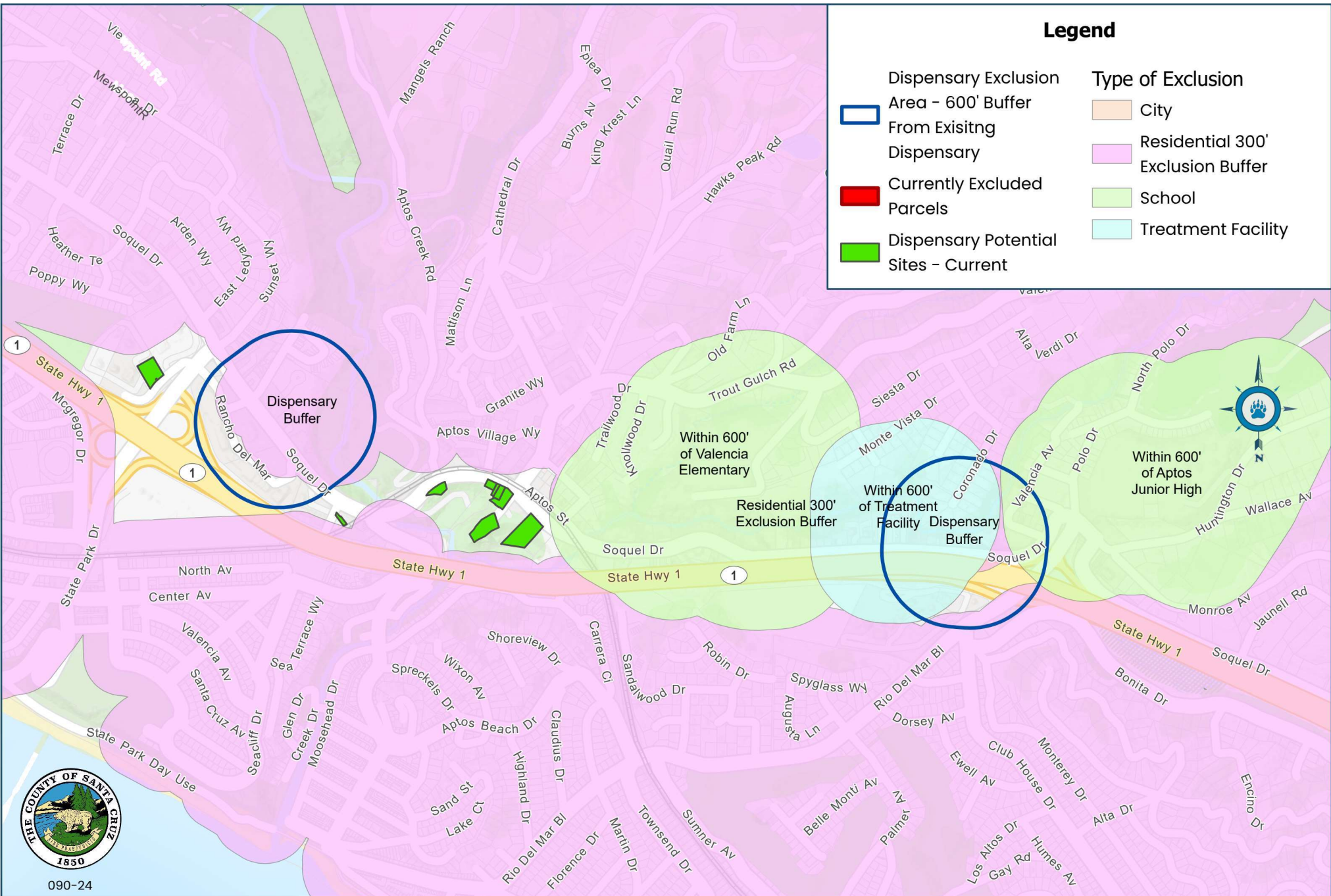
Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.

Parcels for Potential Cannabis Retail Use - District 1



Parcels for Potential Cannabis Retail Use - District 2



From: [Lukas Hager](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Cannabis Lounge Constituent Comment
Date: Sunday, January 26, 2025 4:32:55 PM

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

To the Board of Supervisors,

As a lifetime Santa Cruz County resident and dedicated voter, I strongly support the allowance of Cannabis Lounges in Santa Cruz County. If we allow them, personal freedom and economic prosperity will increase. It will also be a boon in the fight against social isolation and will lead to the creation of more desperately needed third spaces in our community. Our local industry and tourism could suffer if we fail to adapt to these changing statewide rules

While they certainly are potential health and occupational hazards, County regulations could address many of these issues. The social consumption of Cannabis has a far lower risk of bodily injury and mental harm than drinking or even mountain biking, yet we allow bars and are proud of our mountain biking community. Further, we will not be increasing the risk of youth exposure, as these spaces will be isolated and ID-controlled. The Netherlands has allowed this arrangement for decades, yet they have managed to build a thriving social scene while also mitigating the harm to vulnerable populations.

If the board decides to prohibit these potential lounges, it will be a serious economic and social mistake. Why risk continuing our transformation into an aging retirement community when we can embrace our history at the forefront of the counterculture and build a more vibrant nightlife?

Best,
Lukas Hager

1/18/2025

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

701 Ocean Street, Room 500

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Subject: Concerns Regarding Cannabis Consumption Lounges – Consumer Safety, Community Well-being, and Economic Impacts

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, it is critical to consider their implications on consumer safety, community well-being, and economic impacts. Thoughtful regulation and proactive policies are essential to ensure these spaces are responsibly managed and integrated.

Consumer Safety

The safety of patrons and the broader community must remain a priority in the operation of cannabis consumption lounges. To safeguard patrons and the community, training of staff and consumers is imperative.

Knowledge of Dosage and Titration

Cannabis consumption affects individuals differently. Policies considered should include:

- Cap on THC levels in products consumed on-site.
- Limit the quantity of cannabis products consumed per visit such as restricting usage to single-use product use only.
- Ensure staff are thoroughly trained to emphasize the "start low and go slow" approach, providing guidance on product potency and appropriate consumption levels.

Monitoring Consumption

To minimize risks and ensure patron safety:

- Staff must recognize signs of overconsumption and proactively assist those feeling unwell.
- Implement lounge video surveillance to monitor consumption, customer safety and enforce compliance with policies.
- Promote or provide safe ride options to ensure guests do not leave under the influence, protecting both patrons and the community.

Promoting Safe Use

Educating patrons about responsible cannabis use will safeguard patrons and is crucial to reducing potential harm. Staff should:

- Be well-informed on consumption methods, potential effects, and safe practices.
- Provide clear guidance to encourage informed decision-making and responsible use, reducing the risk of adverse effects.

Community Well-being

Cannabis lounges must operate without compromising the quality of life for residents. Key considerations include:

- **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.
- **Buffer Zones and Operating Hours:** Clear buffer zones (e.g., 1,000 feet from sensitive use areas such as schools, parks, libraries, and preschools) and limiting operating hours can mitigate potential concerns while allowing for strategic placement in economically supportive areas. Limiting the hours of operation for cannabis lounges can have several advantages in mitigating their potential impact on the surrounding community including: reduced traffic congestion; enhanced safety for children to avoid overlap times when children are traveling to and from school to limit exposure to lounges and their patrons; prevention of DUI's, particularly late night operations, often associated with increased substance use; and preservation of neighborhood norms limiting late night noise and disturbances.
- **Zoning Regulations are** essential to ensure businesses operate without negatively impacting surrounding neighborhoods, traffic, or community safety; therefore, limiting lounges to existing retail sites, adjacent parcels, or new spaces within current zoning is critical. Any expansion into areas zoned for restaurants and bars should not be considered without thorough community input, and expansion of monitoring and enforcement. Bars and restaurants are subject to stricter state-level training and state and local safety oversight to ensure compliance for public safety.
- **DUI Protocols:** Implement strict policies to reduce impaired driving risks, including consequences for licensees violating these protocols. Prior to entering the consumption area, all patrons should sign off on written lounge policies that prohibit driving while intoxicated, and conspicuous signage should be posted inside the lounge to this effect. Lounge operators should provide information about rideshare services and taxis so that patrons who fall into this category are able to safely get to their next destination. Facility operators should have business policies to temporarily or permanently bar patrons who fail to consume responsibly or who violate other posted rules.

Economic and Community Impacts

While cannabis lounges may contribute to local economies through tax revenue, job creation, and business opportunities, the associated costs must be factored into decision-making:

- **Enhanced Enforcement and Monitoring:** Licensing must include regular inspections, compliance audits, and law enforcement monitoring to maintain safety and public trust.

Establishment of an inspection plan to ensure adherence to California's Proposition 65, set forth in Title 27 of the California Code of Regulations in addition to local regulations needs to be developed and implemented.

- **Staff Training:** Mandatory comprehensive certification process must be developed and provided for lounge employees. The County should approve training content and identify the proper agency to track completion and monitor compliance. The fiscal impact of development of the training and ongoing monitoring needs to be identified to provide a mechanism to ensure the cost of these services is absorbed by the businesses.
- **Potential 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 Impact:** The costs associated with overseeing Cannabis Lounges encompass a wide range of activities, including the development of comprehensive staff training/certification programs, thorough review and evaluation of Lounge Business Plans, consistent monitoring and tracking of compliance, conducting regular site visits, and implementing enforcement measures. Additionally, the significant societal and economic costs linked to impaired driving, frequently observed with alcohol consumption, highlight the need for robust mitigation strategies to address similar risks in the context of cannabis use.

By adopting robust regulations, zoning restrictions, and proactive safety measures, our community can lead in fostering a responsible framework for this growing industry. While economic development is important, it must be balanced against consumer safety and community well-being.

With careful planning, cannabis consumption lounges can operate safely, respecting community values while contributing positively to the local economy. I urge the Board to incorporate these recommendations into its policy framework.

Thank you for considering these concerns. I welcome the opportunity to collaborate further and contribute to the development of responsible and progressive cannabis policies.

Sincerely,

Brenda Armstrong

Brenda Armstrong

[REDACTED]

Felton, CA 95018

From: [Iraj Hakimelahy](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Cannabis Lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 8:09:59 AM

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Dear Board,

I am concerned about the continuing loosening of cannabis restrictions in our community.

Please vote No to establishment of cannabis lounges in our community.

Iraj Hakimelahy

30 plus years resident of SC county

From: [M & S Haas](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: cannabis lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 10:49:00 AM

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Dear Board Members,

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE vote NO on the cannabis lounges. The health of our community is at stake! Thank you!

Margaret & Steve Haas

From: [joanna.manoff](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Cannabis lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 5:58:33 AM

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Dear Board of Supervisors-

I am asking that you vote NO on expanding the Cannabis lounges in Santa Cruz County. I have been a resident here all my life and have been a Physical Therapist working with Stroke, Spinal cord victims, head injured, neurologically impaired, and special needs individuals for over 30 years. I have seen first hand the need and benefits of having medicinal cannabis available to individuals who need it. I am glad that those who need and can truly benefit from medicinal Cannabis can get it when they need it, but I also know that having Cannabis sites near our schools makes it more accessible to those that should not be using it. I also have two children in their 20's and have witnessed the abuse and addiction and health issues created by Cannabis that have been more pronounced among their friends and their generation with the increasing access to it. So many people that smoked Marijuana 20-30 years ago do not realize that the Cannabis that is out there today is not the same. It is more powerful, with more THC, and doing much more damage to our bodies than we realize! Not enough studies have been done! Our youth/community should not be the guinea pigs as we figure this out! Please vote absolutely NO to more lounges!

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Joanna Manoff

[REDACTED]

Santa Cruz, CA 95060

[REDACTED]

From: [Barb Tidmore](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Cannabis lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 7:31:31 AM

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I have read Ms Al Lami's letter to the editor about allowing cannabis lounges to operate in our community. I am firmly opposed to this idea for all the reasons stated. . There is no good reason to allow them other than more tax revenue for the city or county. Please vote NO.

Barbara Tidmore

From: [Lloyd Colombini](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Cannabis Lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 8:30:10 AM

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Please vote NO. Thank you.

Sent from my iPad

From: [Sage Smiley](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Cannabis lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 11:38:35 AM

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Hi Board

I have serious concerns about this. Where it will end? We asked you not to allow a dispensary so close to a middle and high school. You folks chose to ignore the professionals who YOU have entrusted with the care and education of our kids. Please don't do this again. Every expansion of access also expands to our kids. Please listen to the experts in the field, working with youth directly. The legalization, of which I am a fan, is having a surprisingly large effect on our kids. Not a fan. I run one of the two substance use programs for medi-cal youth in our county. I speak from direct contact and experience. I am also the mom of a 17 year old, here in Santa Cruz and what I hear from him and his friends is the same info I hear from our clients. It's everywhere, easy access, it's promoted everywhere. ALL their cannabis comes from dispensaries, their "plug" gets it and re-sells for profit.

The usage is increasing, the volume is increasing and we know the potency is extreme. The effects are serious for a surprising number of kids. We will be dealing with this and the detrimental effects for a long time.

These opinions are my own and not necessarily of the agency I work for. Thanks.

Sage Smiley, LCSW | Program Manager

(Pronouns: she/her).

Encompass Community Services



www.encompasscs.org

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From: [Emily Williams](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Cannabis use
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 12:27:52 PM

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I want to put my vote in for NO on cannabis lounges and our teens being supplied with easier access to cannabis. I feel strongly that this would hurt our teens and children.
I know too many people who have been hurt by use of cannabis.
Please do not pass this vote!

Thank you!
Emily Williams
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Shannon Conley](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: County BOS Meeting Agenda item 11, 18 - Cannabis Lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 11:00:24 AM

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To the County Board of Supervisors

RE: Item 11, 18

Dear Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors,

I am a parent of children who I have raised in Santa Cruz. I am very concerned about the agenda item on the County Board of Supervisors meeting agenda for the meeting on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 with regards to the cannabis consumption/smoking/vaping lounges in our community. I strongly urge the board to vote **no** on allowing these establishments to exist in our city. At a time when drug use has skyrocketed with the state legalization of cannabis, I believe allowing these establishments to have space in our community not only sends mixed messages to our youth but is a dangerous precedent in the acceptance of drug use in our community.

If we are to take the health and safety of our youth seriously, these establishments serve no good purpose to the community. We all know that youth cannot legally purchase marijuana, however, we all are aware that in our community that already has establishments that sell to individuals over the age of 21, adding more establishments only increases the availability of the product, making it easier for underage consumers to attain. I feel our youth are particularly susceptible to added product in the market, as the acceptance of cannabis usage is on the rise. What is alarmingly on the rise as well is the health issues that come with habitual use of the product. Our youth are bombarded with mixed messages about the safety and use of cannabis and many are self-medicating with the drug. Allowing establishments to take hold in our community is only going to increase the usage by underage consumers and increase the horrible effects to their health and wellbeing.

I have firsthand witnessed the dangerous effects of cannabis usage in youth. It has touched my personal community. There is substantial evidence that frequent use of cannabis is having a huge negative impact on youth with a rise in psychosis, and other serious mental health issues. If we care about the health and wellbeing of our youth, we should not allow the installation of one cannabis lounge.

Again, I urge the Board to vote **no** on allowing cannabis lounges in the city and county of Santa Cruz. Please let's not make it harder for our youth to resist cannabis.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Dorothy Conley
[REDACTED]
Santa Cruz, CA 95060



Virus-free www.avast.com



January 24, 2025

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

Re: Item 11: Cannabis Consumption Lounges

Dear members of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors,

Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights is writing to express our concern with the proposal in Agenda Item #11 for Cannabis Consumption Lounges. We ask the Board to pull this item from the January 28th agenda to allow for more time to assess the health impacts that this change would have on Santa Cruz County communities.

If Santa Cruz County is determined to allow cannabis smoking and/or vaping at retailers, then Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights strongly recommends not allowing indoor smoking or vaping, and instead prioritizing outdoor spaces for smoking or vaping. If indoor use is permitted, then we advise **adding a requirement that retailers with a Cannabis Consumption Lounge must be located in a freestanding building**, and not in mixed-use buildings, so that workers, residents, and patrons in attached businesses and residences are not exposed to secondhand cannabis smoke.

Likewise, we support the option to only permit consumption lounges at current retail sites or adjacent parcels, and not at new locations, which could significantly increase the number of cannabis retail locations.

A new [Surgeon General's Report](#) was released in November 2024, titled "Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities," which addresses exposure to cannabis secondhand smoke. The report found that "Secondhand cannabis smoke contains many of the same toxic and cancer-causing chemicals found in tobacco smoke, and some of those chemicals are found in higher amounts in secondhand cannabis smoke than in secondhand tobacco smoke." The report also stated, "As states and communities consider whether use of cannabis in public places should be permitted, **protecting all populations from exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, including exposure to cannabis smoke, in all indoor settings should remain a priority.**"ⁱⁱ

The report also emphasizes that "The increased legalization of recreational cannabis at state and local levels represents a threat to smokefree norms and protections and has implications for health disparities, due to creating exemptions for cannabis smoking" and advises that "smokefree policies will be most protective if they cover all emissions (i.e., smoke, aerosol) from the full range of products, including e-cigarettes, cigars, waterpipe, and cannabis."ⁱⁱ

If smoking and/or vaping in cannabis retailers is allowed, workers in these businesses would be exposed to increased indoor air pollution from secondhand smoke in order to do their job. **We strongly urge you to not weaken our longstanding smokefree workplace protections.**

Santa Cruz County's workforce should be able to breathe air that is free from all types of secondhand

smoke exposure—including people working in the cannabis industry. If cannabis smoking is brought indoors, employees working in these new and expanded cannabis businesses will be exposed to secondhand smoke at a much higher rate than the general public and will suffer the negative health effects of that exposure. This is a public health issue and will affect everyone in the community if an entire new class of unprotected workers must sacrifice their health for a paycheck.

Cannabis secondhand smoke and aerosol are a source of indoor pollution and toxins being emitted into the environment, and cannabis products should not be smoked or vaped in indoor spaces in order to protect the health of workers and patrons. While cannabis is now legal, it should not be used in ways that harm other people.

We advise Santa Cruz County to prioritize public health when considering allowing Cannabis Consumption Lounges, Instead of bringing secondhand smoke back indoors.

Thank you for your leadership and desire to make Santa Cruz County the best place to live, work, and visit. Please feel free to contact me at 510-841-3045 if you have any questions, comments, or feedback.

For additional Scientific Rationale and citations, see next page.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Hallett, MPH
President and CEO

Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights is a national, member-based, not-for-profit organization based in Berkeley, CA that is dedicated to helping nonsmokers breathe smokefree air since 1976.

Scientific Rationale

The new [Surgeon General's Report](#), released in November 2024, confirms the current body of science that shows that both tobacco and cannabis smoke have similar chemical composition and suggests that they may have harmful cardiovascular health effects, such as atherosclerosis (partially blocked arteries), heart attack, and stroke.ⁱⁱⁱ In peer-reviewed research studies, tobacco and cannabis smoke have both been shown to impair blood vessel function^{iv} and secondhand cannabis smoke contains many of the same carcinogens and toxic chemicals as secondhand tobacco smoke.^v

Secondhand smoke from combusted cannabis contains fine particulate matter which is a form of indoor air pollution, which can be breathed deeply into the lungs and can cause lung irritation, asthma attacks, and makes respiratory infections more likely.^{vi,vii} Exposure to fine particulate matter—from tobacco smoke, cannabis smoke, wood smoke, or any other combusted source—can exacerbate health problems especially for people with respiratory conditions like asthma, bronchitis, or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).^{viii,ix}

Ventilation, air purification systems, and smoking rooms are not a solution to secondhand tobacco or cannabis smoke exposure. The American Society for Heating, Refrigeration, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), the standard setting body for the HVAC industry, affirms that mechanical solutions like ventilation and other air cleaning technologies cannot control for the health hazards of secondhand

smoke. Notably, ASHRAE bases its ventilation standard (62.1) 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.**^x

False claims of being able to “clean” the air by filtration or using other chemicals are not a substitute for clean air. **The only known way to reduce the risks associated with secondhand smoke is with a 100% smokefree environment.** This is affirmed by all leading health agencies, including the Office of the Surgeon General.^{xi}

A study published in 2021 by Stanford researchers found that **smoking a cannabis joint indoors can produce extremely high indoor particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) concentrations, thereby exposing workers and the public to dangerous secondhand cannabis smoke.** The average PM_{2.5} emission rate of pre-rolled cannabis joints was found to be **3.5 times the average emission** rate of Marlboro tobacco cigarettes, the most popular US cigarette brand.^{xii}

Likewise, published research measuring the indoor air quality at a San Francisco cannabis lounge indicates that **particle concentrations from dabbing and vaporizing cannabis can create levels of indoor air pollution that are hazardous to human health,** even when cannabis smoking is not permitted indoors. Particulate exposure at these concentrations can cause cardiovascular and respiratory disease.^{xiii}

A 2022 study from UCSF researchers measured the PM_{2.5} concentrations in a San Francisco cannabis retailer’s smoking lounge and found that the installation of a ventilation system only resulted in a 12% decrease in the level of fine particulate matter in the air.^{xiv}

ⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, November 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco-surgeon-general-reports/about/2024-end-tobacco-disparities.html>

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, November 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco-surgeon-general-reports/about/2024-end-tobacco-disparities.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Springer, M.L.; Glantz, S.A. “Marijuana Use and Heart Disease: Potential Effects of Public Exposure to Smoke,” University of California at San Francisco. April 13, 2015. <https://tobacco.ucsf.edu/sites/tobacco.ucsf.edu/files/u9/MSHS%20fact%20sheet%20for%20CA%204-13-15.pdf>

^{iv} Wang, X., et al., “Brief exposure to marijuana secondhand smoke impairs vascular endothelial function” (conference abstract). *Circulation* 2014; 130: A19538. http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/130/Suppl_2/A19538.abstract

^v Moir, D., et al., A comparison of mainstream and sidestream marijuana and tobacco cigarette smoke produced under two machine smoking conditions. *Chem Res Toxicol* 21: 494-502. (2008). <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18062674>

^{vi} Hillier, FC.; et al. “Concentration and particle size distribution in smoke from marijuana cigarettes with different Δ9-tetrahydrocannabinol content.” *Fundamental and Applied Toxicology*. Volume 4, Issue 3, Part 1, June 1984, Pages 451-454. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/0272059084902021>

^{vii} “Air and Health: Particulate Matter.” National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. <http://ephtracking.cdc.gov/showAirHealth.action#ParticulateMatter>

^{viii} Grana, R; Benowitz, N; Glantz, S. “[Background Paper on E-cigarettes](#),” Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education, University of California, San Francisco and WHO Collaborating Center on Tobacco Control. December 2013.

^{ix} Brook, R.D.; et al. Particulate matter air pollution and cardiovascular disease: An update to the scientific statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2010; 121: 2331-78. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20458016>

^x ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 62.1-2022 - Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality. American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers, Inc.

https://ashrae.iwrapper.com/ASHRAE_PREVIEW_ONLY_STANDARDS/STD_62.1_2022Quality

^{xi} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20669524/>

^{xii} Ott, W., et al., Measuring indoor fine particle concentrations, emission rates, and decay rates from cannabis use in a residence, *Atmospheric Environment: X*, Volume 10, 2021, 100106, ISSN 2590-1621, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aeaoa.2021.100106>. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S259016212100006X>

^{xiii} Murphy, M.B.; Huang, A.S.; Schick, S.F., “[PM2.5 concentrations in a cannabis store with on-site consumption](#),” *Environmental Health Perspectives* 129(6), June 16, 2021.

<https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/pdf/10.1289/EHP8689>

^{xiv} Huang, A.S.; Murphy, M.B.C.; Jacob, P.; Schick, S.F., “PM2.5 concentrations in the smoking lounge of a cannabis store,” *Environmental Science & Technology Letters* 9(6): 551–556, May 26, 2022. <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.estlett.2c00148>

From: [Avril Yang](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Date: Sunday, January 26, 2025 8:02:17 PM

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

I would love to go to a lounge n vape im 64 now ...i confess. Thc has gotten me to the healthiest ive been...education is important for all ages i was a mom at 17 ...i would say that alchohol is by far the worst substance makes people mean ..the plant is fine my children do not partake they all grown i said if you want to you can be mindfull they dont want it but they will get alcohol n be ill for days ..this is real. I think the pillls kill the most i never oded on thc n it helps with my anxiety lets do it b4 we are in lock down again ok. Also i was raised in a JW cult so i was not allowed to do anything so i think a lot pros n cons ...i notice old people will drink n get drunk n pop pills tooo ..there the first to say no to the plant ok bye bye ...
Sent from my iPad

From: [Francine Tyler](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Please do not allow more cannabis outlets in our area
Date: Sunday, January 26, 2025 9:19:13 PM

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

Please vote no on cannabis lounges and start limiting or even closing dispensaries, if possible.
Thank you / michael and francine tyler, Santa Cruz

From: [Courtney Thomsen](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Please do not approve cannabis lounges!
Date: Sunday, January 26, 2025 9:28:04 PM

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

Hello Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisor Members,

I am writing you to plead with you to please NOT approve cannabis lounges in our county. As a parent of teenagers and young adults, I have seen first-hand the detrimental effects of cannabis on young people. While I know the county may see this as a good move for business for the county, I ask you to consider the future of teenagers as a higher priority than trying to make the county a cannabis destination. Unfortunately, it is far too easy for young people to obtain a medical marijuana card online, even as underage users. The cannabis retailers in this county are not keeping these young people from purchasing their goods with extremely high levels of THC, known to be damaging to developing brains. If the county were to pass legislation to turn these dispensaries into lounges and hang-out destinations, I cannot imagine now much more young people will be drawn to their locations. I have known far too many families who have been torn apart from their teenagers falling into cannabis use because of the permissive nature of our culture, the dispensaries on every corner, the narrative on social media that it's healthy and non-addictive, and even the marketing of dispensaries that they are "Kind People" and welcoming spaces to visit. Many teenagers from our community are experiencing cannabis induced psychosis, leading to the breakdown of families, dropping out of college, and even homelessness in many cases. Please take a stand on behalf of our youth and say no to cannabis lounges in Santa Cruz County. This generation of young people has had enough challenges already. Please remove this potential toxic possibility from their lives by standing up for their wellness instead of the cannabis industry.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Courtney Thomsen
Resident of Scotts Valley

From: Jenny Putt
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Please vote no for on-site cannabis use locations
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 9:54:53 AM

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

Please vote no for on-site cannabis use locations in tomorrow's vote. Protect our youth. See the following article for evidence as to why.

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

Cannabis lounges pose a risk to the health of Santa Cruz County youth — the board of supervisors should vote no

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

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

Thank you!!!

Jenny Friedrich (mom of two daughters on the westside)

Sent from my iPhone



Coalition Chairs

Katie Thompson
Luz Areli Sotelo

Member Organizations

Breathe California
Capitola Police Department
Community Prevention Partners
Dominican Hospital
Downtown Streets Team
Pajaro Valley Community Health Trust
Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance, Inc.
Salud Para La Gente
Salud y Cariño
Santa Cruz Police Department
County of Santa Cruz
Department of Public Works
County of Santa Cruz
Friday Night Live
County of Santa Cruz
Health Services Agency
Santa Cruz County
Office of Education
Santa Cruz County Sheriffs
Save Our Shores
Scotts Valley Police Department
Watsonville Department of Public Works
Watsonville Police Department
Watsonville Wetlands Watch
and Community Members

Contact Information

P.O. Box 962
1070 Emeline Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95061
PH: (831) 454-4141
FAX: (831) 454-5048

January 24, 2025

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

Dear Supervisors Cummings, De Serpa, Hernandez, Koenig, and Martinez:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Santa Cruz County Tobacco Education Coalition regarding the proposed establishment of cannabis lounges in unincorporated county areas. We seek to provide some considerations from a public health perspective for you to consider while formulating policy in this area.

The Tobacco Education Coalition is a partnership of people and organizations committed to advocating for a tobacco-free and smoke-free lifestyle and environment. **We ask that you consider only allowing non-inhalable modes of administration (no smoke or vaping) to keep indoor air clean for all workers, keeping in mind there are many other ways of using cannabis that will allow indoor air to stay clean.**

Smoke is smoke: The 2024 U.S. Surgeon General Report¹ has highlighted that many of the same toxins and carcinogens that are in tobacco smoke are also in smoke from cannabis. At least 33 chemicals known to cause cancer have been identified as being common to the smoke formed by the burning of cannabis and the smoke from the burning of tobacco.²

Keeping hard-fought smoke-free laws whole to protect workers: Smoke in lounges would go against the spirit of current California smoke-free workplace laws, which were some of the first in the country, and which aim to protect all workers, including hospitality workers. In our efforts, we have learned that people who use tobacco as individuals, and who also have jobs in hospitality settings, were glad not to have to breathe more secondhand tobacco smoke than they wanted, while on the job. We hope lessons like this show that regardless of how people spend time outside work, they should be protected from smoke while at work. Secondhand smoke of any kind in indoor workplaces affects employees (including servers and janitorial staff) and other workers (such as delivery drivers and enforcement staff).

No ventilation system can fully address toxins in smoke: If the standard is to keep the air clean enough for employee protection, there is a lack of solid evidence-based objective research to show that smoke's health impacts could be fully addressed by ventilation systems. The World Health Organization³ has acknowledged that nonsmokers' exposure to secondhand smoke cannot be eliminated by ventilation and recommends 100% smoke-free indoor environments. A 2021 study⁴ in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* concluded that toxins in smoke from cannabis cannot be removed enough by engineering interventions to protect workers fully in indoor spaces.

In addition, the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) has recommended one approach for more than the last decade, and last reiterated in 2023, that the only means of avoiding health effects is not to have smoking inside or near buildings.⁵

The risk to tobacco-smoke-free laws: Smoke in cannabis lounges also opens up the door for tobacco companies to argue that if air filters can filter out cannabis smoke, why not tobacco smoke? Smoke in indoor spaces would endanger 50 years of workplace health protections for hospitality workers.

Preserving health while formulating policy: On behalf of the coalition, please consider all the work that has been done by public health workers and members of the public to ensure the health of workers in indoor spaces. However you formulate policy around cannabis, please preserve the current smoke-free workplace protections.

There are many ways to keep products safe for legal purchase, but the commitment to clean air in all indoor workplaces, including and especially inside hospitality-related workplaces, must be protected.

Sincerely,

Randy Uang
Member, Santa Cruz County Tobacco Education Coalition

¹ U.S. Surgeon General (2024), *Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities: A Report of the Surgeon General*. "Smokefree Policies and Other Tobacco Products and Cannabis", p. 558-559.

² California Environmental Protection Agency (2009), "Evidence of the Carcinogenicity of Marijuana Smoke", Reproductive and Cancer Hazard Assessment Branch, August 2009.

³ World Health Organization (2007), "Smoke-free Inside", Facts about Second-Hand Tobacco Smoke, page 4.

⁴ Rotering TL et al. (2021), "Emerging Indoor Air Laws for Onsite Cannabis Consumption Businesses in the U.S.", *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 61(6): e267-e278.

⁵ American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (2023), "ASHRAE Position Document on Environmental Tobacco Smoke", guidance for 2023-2026.

From: [Jean Brocklebank](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Cc: [Manu Koenig](#); [Felipe Hernandez](#); [Kimberly De Serpa](#); [Justin Cummings](#); [Monica Martinez](#)
Subject: Regular Agenda Item 11 - cannabis consumption
Date: Sunday, January 26, 2025 11:59:55 AM

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

Dear Supervisors ~

I have read the investigative reports that quoted medical professionals in the NY Times and now I have just read the following Guest Commentary by a pediatric nurse on Lookout. This absolutely calls for the **Precautionary Principle!** What are we doing, by experimenting on the health of children as well as adults?! The THC levels in 2025 pot are

I urge your NO vote on Agenda Item 11

- 11. Consider options to allow cannabis consumption at retail locations and potential cannabis business tax revisions related to consumption and non-cannabis goods (County Administrative Office)

Jean

https://lookout.co/cannabis-lounges-pose-a-risk-to-the-health-of-santa-cruz-county-youth-the-board-of-supervisors-should-vote-no/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_campaign=Sunday%20Reads%2012625

[Opinion from Community Voices](#)

Cannabis lounges pose a risk to the health of Santa Cruz County youth — the board of supervisors should vote no

Nadia Al-Lami

Quick Take

We should be concerned about cannabis lounges, writes Nadia Al-Lami, a director of adolescent health in Santa Cruz County who has witnessed the harmful effects of high-potency cannabis on youth, including increased risk of psychosis. On Tuesday, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors is due to consider allowing on-site cannabis consumption lounges, which Al-Lami believes would increase the visibility and accessibility of these products, disproportionately affecting vulnerable teens and communities. She urges the board to reject this proposal and implement stronger regulations to protect our youth.

As a pediatric nurse practitioner and adolescent health director working in Santa Cruz County for the past seven years, I have seen the significant impacts of potent THC/cannabis products on my patients.

At [Tuesday's meeting of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors](#), the board is set to consider allowing on-site cannabis consumption/smoking/vaping lounges in our community. The supervisors are still deciding if this is a good idea, and I strongly urge the board to vote no.

These adult-only spaces might seem harmless, but their ripple effects could leave our teens more vulnerable to substance use than ever before.

Allowing secondary on-site consumption lounges would increase the availability and visibility of cannabis retailers. [Studies show](#) that how close cannabis retailers are to where kids live, learn and play influences the likelihood that they will use cannabis.

This is also an equity issue — Latinx youth are [three times more negatively impacted](#) by how close cannabis businesses are compared to other races/ethnicities. Keep in mind that the products on the market today are vastly different from the ones sold 10 or 20 or 30 years ago. In the 1990s, cannabis products had roughly 5% THC. [Today, my patients are consuming products with 80% and 90% THC.](#)

This is not the same cannabis that many of us adults today were exposed to in our youth. These products are rapidly evolving, and both the potency and amount of THC consumed by our youth is unprecedented.

Cannabis is legal on the state level, but not at the federal level, making it more difficult to quickly and comprehensively study the effects of these increasingly potent products. Even still, we do have substantial evidence that [frequent use of cannabis increases risks of psychosis](#), including schizophrenia among adolescents and young adults. It also increases risks of depressive disorders, suicidal ideation and [suicide attempts](#).

I have seen this with my patients. A 14-year-old with uncontrolled vomiting due to cannabinoid 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 how much product marketing there is online compared with public health messaging, there is a strong misperception about the health consequences of using these products with such high concentrations of THC.

When I ask them, many of my patients say they believe cannabis is not addictive, even though it has been [documented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) that roughly 3 in 10 people who use cannabis have cannabis use disorder.

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.”

Nearly all 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.

If lounges are permitted to open in secondary locations, the number of dispensaries could effectively double. So, though it is not legal for individuals under the age of 21, the presence of these consumption lounges, the increasing visibility and normalization of cannabis and the products they sell in our community are having a direct impact on our youth.

To ignore this impact would be irresponsible.

Beyond impacts to the health of our youth, these lounges raise additional concerns about impaired driving, secondhand smoke exposure and the rollback of smoke-free air and workplace laws.

In light of these concerns, I ask the public to voice their opposition and the board of supervisors to vote against cannabis lounges until more research is done on the potential harms of these products and more regulations are in place to keep our community safe.

To the board, please work to ensure that policies have our community well-being in mind. Require safety warning labels on products that have documented health risks based on the evidence available. Prohibit lounges to limit access and normalization of the use of these products. If you must allow them, at least cap both the potency and amount of products allowed to be consumed in the lounges.

If you are concerned about the continuing loosening of cannabis restrictions in our community, let the board know. Email them at boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov by 5 p.m. Monday.

Let's prioritize health over profits.

Nadia Al-Lami is a pediatric nurse practitioner and adolescent health director practicing in Santa Cruz. She is the current treasurer and former co-president of the Northern California Regional Chapter of the Society of Adolescent Health and Medicine. She holds a master's degree in nursing and was an adolescent health fellow at UC San Francisco.



January 24, 2025

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors
701 Ocean Street, Room 500
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
BoardOfSupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov

Re: Agenda item 11 for January 28, 2025, Consider options to allow cannabis consumption at retail locations and potential cannabis business tax revisions related to consumption and non-cannabis goods (County Administrative Office) - OPPOSE

Dear Supervisors Cummings, DeSerpa, Hernandez, Koenig, and Martinez,

On behalf of **Getting it Right from the Start**, a project of the Public Health Institute, a 501c3 non-profit organization that has served California to promote public health for the past 55 years, we are writing to express our strong opposition to the proposal regarding the permitting of additional cannabis on-site consumption activities. Since 2017 we've worked with city and county officials to discourage on-site consumption, as we do all across the nation. As of January of 2024, 67% of jurisdictions allowing storefront retailers in California wisely continued to prohibit on-site consumption lounges, including Capitola, Santa Cruz and Watsonville.¹ Rather than leading as you have in tobacco control, the proposed measures will undermine the public health protections wisely adopted by your cities.

For decades, public health advocates, medical providers and many unions have fought to promote clean indoor air and protect workers and the public in general from the health risks associated with secondhand smoke. Indeed, Santa Clara County has been a leader in tobacco control, passing its recent groundbreaking law on tobacco filters, building on a proud history of other measures. For this reason, we are surprised and dismayed to see a willingness to undermine public health, renormalize smoking and weaken worker protection solely to increase the profitability of a handful of vocal business owners.

Smoke-free air and worker protections have been one of the great advances of the public health in the last century. We strongly oppose allowing onsite cannabis consumption lounges because such an action significantly undermines the progress made to ensure smoke-free air. It puts employees and customers at an increased risk for heart disease,

¹ Getting it Right from the Start. 2024 Local Cannabis Policy Scorecards and Press Kit. Public Health Institute.
https://www.gettingitrightfromthestart.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Press-Kit_2024-State-of-Cannabis-Policy-in-California-Cities-Counties.pdf

stroke, and other adverse effects.² Employees would be at particular risk as they would have no choice but to breathe in second-hand smoke/vapor during their shifts; exposure is a concern whether they are working indoors at a consumption lounge or outdoors at a special event.^{3,4} Even allowing just vaping products has little impact on the high

AQI thresholds for PM_{2.5}

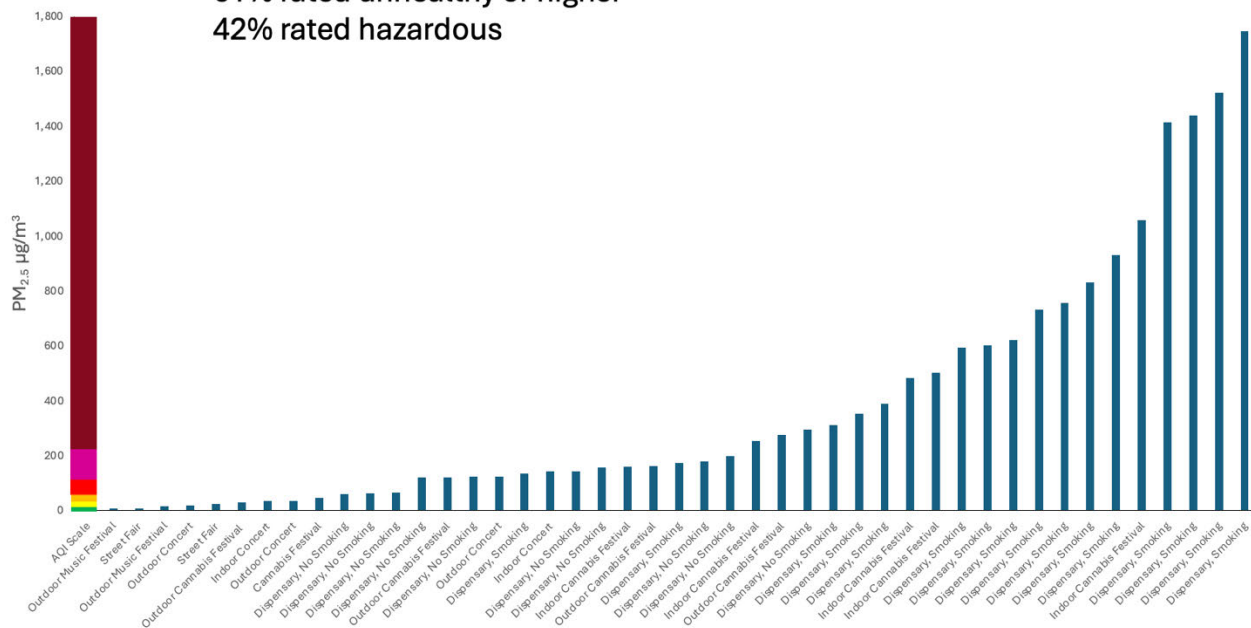
AQI	"Level of Concern"	PM _{2.5} µg/m ³
0-50	Healthy	0-9
51-100	Moderate	9.1-35.4
101-150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	35.5-55.4
151-200	Unhealthy	55.5-125.4
201-300	Very Unhealthy	125.5-225.4
301-500	Hazardous	225.5+

particulate matter in such lounges. Here are 3 **Figures** with some of the recent evidence from UCSF researcher S. Schick, PhD. who has studied air at 45 cannabis consumption spaces in California. First a reminder of what are considered unhealthy or hazardous levels for particulate matter (PM_{2.5} – the dangerous sized particles for health), AQI is Air Quality Index.

Second here is the data measured at 45 cannabis consumption locations of different

PM_{2.5} at 45 field experiments

61% rated unhealthy or higher
42% rated hazardous



² Jeffers, A. M., Glantz, S., Byers, A. L., & Keyhani, S. (2024). Association of Cannabis Use With Cardiovascular Outcomes Among US Adults. *Journal of the American Heart Association*, 13(5), e030178. <https://doi.org/10.1161/JAHA.123.030178>

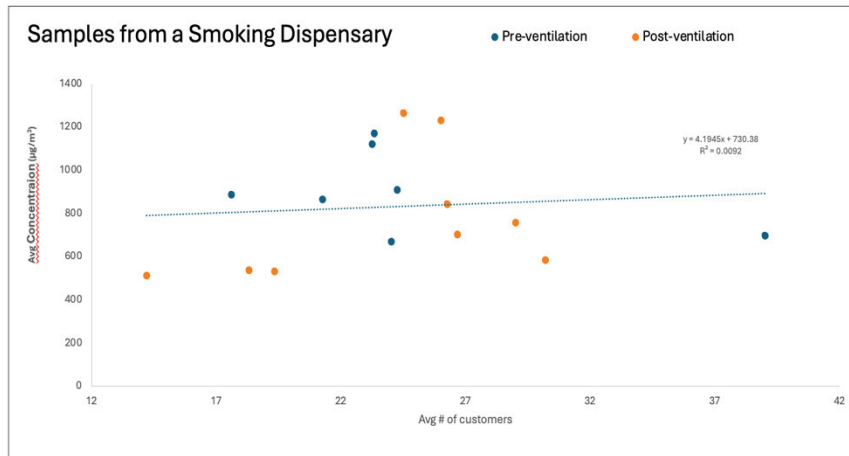
³ Cheng, K. C., Huang, G., & Hildemann, L. M. (2023). PM_{2.5} exposure to marijuana smoke on golf courses and other public outdoor locations: A pilot observational study. *The Science of the total environment*, 896, 165236. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2023.165236>

⁴ Tong, M., Goodman, N., & Vardoulakis, S. (2024). Impact of secondhand smoke on air quality in partially enclosed outdoor hospitality venues: a review. *BMC public health*, 24(1), 1872. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-19394-w>

types, showing that dispensaries with onsite smoking had uniformly dangerous levels of particulate matter, sometimes extraordinarily so, rivaling those of severe wildfire situations.

Third, the data showed that the oft-cited ventilation systems, as we already knew from

Ventilation did not decrease PM_{2.5}



tobacco research, are ineffective, and merely a ruse to justify allowing the return of smoke-filled spaces.

Let's be clear. We need to have balanced objectives for a legal cannabis sector. Those objectives should be to provide legal access to a safer product and end the illicit market, but they

must also should include the specific goals of protecting youth and public health including not driving up consumption, or social normalization of cannabis use or of smoking. Our laws say that protection of the public welfare should have primacy in the regulation.

Cannabis is the leading substance of abuse in our nation. Harmful, daily use has skyrocketed in young and older adults. It is a significant contributor to a subset of serious mental illness cases including psychosis and mood disorders.⁵ Our California cannabis industry has migrated almost exclusively to ultra-high potency products that have doubled the rate of addiction and vastly increased serious adverse effects including cannabis induced psychosis and schizophrenia, depression and suicidality.⁶ One in ten young American adults is now using cannabis daily or near daily, triple rates of daily use in the early 1990s. The ten-fold increase in potency of flower^{7,8,9} and the proliferation of

⁵ Starzer MSK, Nordentoft M, Hjorthøj C. Rates and Predictors of Conversion to Schizophrenia or Bipolar Disorder Following Substance-Induced Psychosis. *Am J Psychiatry*. 2018 Apr 1;175(4):343-350. doi: 10.1176/appi.ajp.2017.17020223. Epub 2017 Nov 28. Erratum in: *Am J Psychiatry*. 2019 Apr 1;176(4):324. doi:

⁶ [Report of the California High Potency Cannabis Scientific Committee to the California Department of Public Health](#). October 30, 2024.

⁷ ElSohly MA, Ross SA, Mehmedic Z, Arafat R, Yi B, Banahan BF 3rd. Potency trends of delta9-THC and other cannabinoids in confiscated marijuana from 1980-1997. *J Forensic Sci*. 2000 Jan;45(1):24-30. PMID: 10641915.

⁸ Freeman TP, Craft S, Wilson J, Stylianou S, ElSohly M, Di Forti M, Lynskey MT. Changes in delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD) concentrations in cannabis over time: systematic review and meta-analysis. *Addiction*. 2021 May;116(5):1000-1010. doi: 10.1111/add.15253. Epub 2020 Nov 7. PMID: 33160291

⁹ Geweda MM, Majumdar CG, Moore MN, Elhendawy MA, Radwan MM, Chandra S, ElSohly MA. Evaluation of dispensaries' cannabis flowers for accuracy of labeling of cannabinoids content. *J Cannabis Res*. 2024 Mar 9;6(1):11. doi: 10.1186/s42238-024-00220-4. PMID: 38461280; PMCID: PMC10924369.

industrialized high potency extracts like shatter, resins and waxes has more than doubled the risk of developing cannabis use disorder compared to twenty years ago, now reaching 20-25% of those who use cannabis.^{10,11,12} These trends have also been associated with greatly increased risk of developing psychosis or schizophrenia, by as much as 3-5 fold with daily use, or daily use of products with more than 10%THC, respectively.^{13,14} In 2022, past month cannabis consumers were almost four times as likely to report daily or near daily use (42.3% vs. 10.9%) and 7.4 times more likely to report daily use (28.2% vs. 3.8%) as alcohol consumers.¹⁵ It is now very difficult to find traditional lower potency cannabis in California retailers. The industry has intransigently fought measures to make products safer and less addictive or attractive to youth, as well as to inform consumers of risks.

In Northern California, including the Santa Cruz area, our own research with Kaiser Permanente has shown that use during pregnancy, which is quite harmful, has doubled to 9%, 2012-2022, with major racial disparities, less present for other types of use. Use by black pregnant women rose from 20% to 28%. Use by Latina pregnant women has doubled from 5.7% to 10.4%, a group that has traditionally had low rates and better neonatal outcomes. Use by Asian pregnant women, although with the lowest rates, still tripled from 0.7% to 2.4%.¹⁶ This is associated with adverse maternal outcomes like gestational hypertension and preeclampsia, and harm to the exposed newborn including low birth, weight, prematurity and NICU use, and is associated with long term developmental harms to the exposed infants.^{17,18}

Opening onsite consumption lounges creates new social environments that will further normalize cannabis use and dependency, aggravating these concerning trends.

¹⁰ Leung, J., Chan, G. C., Hides, L., & Hall, W. D. (2020). What is the prevalence and risk of cannabis use disorders among people who use cannabis? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Addictive behaviors*, 109, 106479

¹¹ Feingold, D., Livne, O., Rehm, J., & Lev-Ran, S. (2020). Probability and correlates of transition from cannabis use to DSM-5 cannabis use disorder: Results from a large-scale nationally representative study. *Drug and alcohol review*, 39(2), 142-151.

¹² Hall, W., & Pacula, R. L. (2003). *Cannabis use and dependence: public health and public policy*. Cambridge university press.

¹³ Di Forti M, Quattrone D, Freeman TP, et al. The contribution of cannabis use to variation in the incidence of psychotic disorder across Europe (EU-GEI): a multicentre case-control study. *Lancet Psychiatry*. 2019;6(5):427-436.

¹⁴ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Health and Medicine Division; Board on Population Health and Public Health Practice; Committee on the Health Effects of Marijuana: An Evidence Review and Research Agenda. The Health Effects of Cannabis and Cannabinoids: The Current State of Evidence and Recommendations for Research. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2017 Jan 12. PMID: 28182367.

¹⁵ Caulkins JP. Changes in self-reported cannabis use in the United States from 1979 to 2022. *Addict Abingdon Engl*. 2024;119(9):1648-1652. doi:10.1111/add.16519

¹⁶ Young-Wolff KC, Chi FW, Lapham GT, Alexeeff SE, Does MB, Ansley D, Campbell CI. Changes in Prenatal Cannabis Use Among Pregnant Individuals From 2012 to 2022. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2024 Aug 30. doi: 10.1097/AOG.0000000000005711. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 39208448.

¹⁷ Young-Wolff, K. C., Adams, S. R., Alexeeff, S. E., Zhu, Y., Chojolan, E., Slama, N. E., Does, M. B., Silver, L. D., Ansley, D., Castellanos, C. L., & Avalos, L. A. (2024). Prenatal Cannabis Use and Maternal Pregnancy Outcomes. *JAMA internal medicine*, 184(9), 1083–1093. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2024.3270>

¹⁸ Avalos LA, Adams SR, Alexeeff SE, Oberman NR, Does MB, Ansley D, Goler N, Padon AA, Silver LD, Young-Wolff KC. Neonatal outcomes associated with in utero cannabis exposure: a population-based retrospective cohort study. *Am J Obstet Gynecol*. 2024 Jul;231(1):132.e1-132.e13.

Typically, lounges have a line-up of dab rigs which provide the highest potency products of all, often to those who are dependent. Workers are inevitably exposed to secondhand cannabis smoke. If a worker is a woman of reproductive age who becomes pregnant, so too will her child be exposed.

Proposals such as AB1775, the 2024 Cannabis Café bill, will allow on-site consumption lounge operators to operate smoke-filled cannabis restaurants and clubs, twenty-five years after our state ended tobacco smoke filled restaurants and clubs. It will increase the number of exposed workers and patrons and the typical length of stay in a lounge.

It's important to note that evidence suggests that cannabis smoke and/or vapor may be even more harmful than tobacco smoke. You may hear cannabis lobbyists coming to tell you that cannabis smoke is safe. We heard those lies the State legislature last year. This is simply not true. Researchers have compared the pollution levels (as fine particulate matter in the air) when a user smokes a Marlboro tobacco cigarette to the pollution levels that occur when the user smokes cannabis in a joint, bong, and pipe, as well as when they vaporize cannabis.¹⁹ They found that all the methods of cannabis consumption produced as much or more pollution than the tobacco cigarette; cannabis joints were the most polluting, producing 3.5 times more particulate matter than the tobacco cigarette. In another study that compared cannabis and tobacco smoke, cannabis smoke was found to have 20 times higher levels of ammonia and 3-5 times more hydrogen cyanide, some aromatic amines, nitrogen dioxide and nitric oxide.²⁰ Secondhand cannabis smoke and vapor pollutes the air as much or more than tobacco. One minute of exposure to cannabis smoke impaired cardiovascular endothelial cell function as much as one minute of tobacco smoke, but the negative effect lasted considerably longer.²¹ Use of vaporized rather than smoked cannabis did not reduce this risk.²²

Decades of research has shown that ventilation systems do not reduce toxic levels of particulate matter in secondhand tobacco smoke and many of the harmful constituents found in cannabis smoke cannot be eliminated through air ventilation systems or air cleaning technologies. In fact, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) states in their standards for ventilation for acceptable indoor air quality that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, that cannabis smoke should not be allowed indoors, and that ventilation and other air filtration

¹⁹ Ott, W.R., Zhao, T., Cheng, K.C., Wallace, L.A., & Hildemann, L.M. (2021). Measuring indoor fine particle concentrations, emission rates, and decay rates from cannabis use in a residence. *Atmospheric Environment: X*; Volume 10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aeaoa.2021.100106>.

²⁰ Moir, D., Rickert, W. S., Levasseur, G., Larose, Y., Maertens, R., White, P., & Desjardins, S. (2008). A comparison of mainstream and sidestream marijuana and tobacco cigarette smoke produced under two machine smoking conditions. *Chemical research in toxicology*, 21(2), 494–502. <https://doi.org/10.1021/tx700275p>

²¹ Wang X, Derakhshandeh R, Liu J, Narayan S, Nabavizadeh P, Le S, Danforth OM, Pinnamaneni K, Rodriguez HJ, Luu E, Sievers RE, Schick SF, Glantz SA, Springer ML. One Minute of Marijuana Secondhand Smoke Exposure Substantially Impairs Vascular Endothelial Function. *J Am Heart Assoc*. 2016 Jul 27;5(8):e003858.

²² Liu J, Nabavizadeh P, Rao P, Derakhshandeh R, Han DD, Guo R, Murphy MB, Cheng J, Schick SF, Springer ML. Impairment of Endothelial Function by Aerosol From Marijuana Leaf Vaporizers. *J Am Heart Assoc*. 2023 Dec 5;12(23):e032969..

technologies cannot eliminate all the health risks caused by cannabis and other smoke. Neither dilution ventilation, air distribution (e.g., “air curtains”) nor air cleaning can be relied upon to control environmental smoke exposure.²³ Indeed states like New Jersey are finally working to correct the ill-advised exemption for casino environments that has long put many thousands of workers at higher risk, after extensive research documented the toll of exposure on their health.

In addition to health risks for employees and customers, we are concerned that allowing social consumption of cannabis at cannabis consumption lounges or licensed special events will increase the possibility of intoxicated driving accidents in Santa Cruz County.^{24,25} This is particular concern when it comes to the use of cannabis edibles, which can take a few hours after being consumed before having their full effect but is relevant to all consumption outside of the home. Shouldn’t policies that inevitably lead to more people driving while high on the streets of Santa Cruz be avoided? This too generates costs to law enforcement and health care and tragedies for families.

Furthermore, under Proposition 64, on-site consumption is limited to the physical premises of a licensed retailer, **sales of cannabis cannot be authorized at remote locations from a licensed premise** as is being discussed. “a local jurisdiction may allow for the smoking, vaporizing, and ingesting of marijuana or marijuana products on the premises of a retailer or microbusiness licensed under this division.” Furthermore, marijuana consumption cannot be visible from any public place or non-age restricted area.

Cannabis advocates will seek to frame this as an equity issue, but this is largely false opportunism. First, most retailers are not equity licensees, they are profit-making businesses just like any of the restaurants where smoking is not allowed today. And rather than food they specialize in sale of an addictive substance. It is not the Board’s obligation to maximize their profits at the expense of the health of the community. Any increased tax revenues will be offset by the cost of increased addiction, mental health and physical health issues. Disparities in consumption can exacerbate existing health disparities in vulnerable groups, especially these at risk for mental health issues, such as LGBTQ youth, those under age 26 whose brains are still developing, and other subsets at greater risk.

²³ ASHRAE. ASHRAE Position Document on Environmental Tobacco Smoke. June 2023.

https://www.ashrae.org/file%20library/about/position%20documents/pd_environmental-tobacco-smoke-2023-06-28.pdf

²⁴ Wilson, F. A., Stimpson, J. P., & Pagán, J. A. (2014). Fatal crashes from drivers testing positive for drugs in the U.S., 1993-2010. *Public health reports (Washington, D.C. : 1974)*, 129(4), 342–350. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003335491412900409>

²⁵ Elvik R. (2013). Risk of road accident associated with the use of drugs: a systematic review and meta-analysis of evidence from epidemiological studies. *Accident; analysis and prevention*, 60, 254–267. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2012.06.017>

Lastly, these policies are not necessary to have a thriving legal cannabis retail sector in Santa Cruz. Statewide the number of licensed retailers has grown steadily. Of course, some fail. That is normal. Most new restaurants do not last 5 years or even one and we cannot realistically expect all cannabis retailers to succeed, nor is it government's role to expose workers to harmful smoke to make sure they succeed.

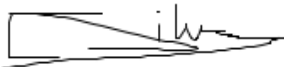
Rather than allowing harmful on-site consumption lounges, the County can take other important steps to help its cannabis retailers succeed by: a) first by not licensing too many, so that those which are licensed are not competing in a race to the bottom of low prices and aggressive advertising (we recommend no more than 1 storefront per 20,000 residents and not too many delivery companies); b) by effectively enforcing against the illicit market, and c) by taking legal and enforcement steps to end the sale of illegal intoxicating hemp products in Santa Cruz, which are often unsafe synthetic compounds which compete with legal cannabis. These steps would provide real relief to legal cannabis operators while also protecting public health and youth.

Specifically, we recommend that Santa Cruz County:

- a) Pull this item from the 1/28 agenda for further in-depth study of the health issues involved, which were not adequately assessed.
- b) Not authorize any on-site consumption lounges.
- c) If allowed limit their activities to edible consumption.
- d) Not allow any expansion of activities to include food sales or consumption or club/entertainment activities.
- e) Consider the above-mentioned recommendations to protect legal cannabis operators of limiting licenses, and more active enforcement against illicit operators and intoxicating hemp.

Cannabis is no ordinary commodity. It should not be treated as such. No one should go to jail for its possession, but no one should land in the hospital or be forced to be exposed to its smoke keep their job. Thank you for your consideration of our views on this important matter.

Respectfully,



Lynn Silver, MD, MPH, FAAP
Director, Getting it Right from the Start
Public Health Institute
lsilver@phi.org, +1 917-974-7065

From: [Julio Andrade](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Cannabis Consumption Lounge Letter
Date: Thursday, January 23, 2025 4:26:35 PM
Attachments: [Cannabis Consumption Lounge 2025.pdf](#)

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

Good evening, Board of Supervisors,

Cradle to Career Santa Cruz County is committed to fostering healthy and thriving communities, particularly for families and youth; we are reaching out regarding the proposed ordinance changes that would allow on-site cannabis consumption lounges. While we understand the interest in exploring new economic opportunities, these changes must be carefully evaluated to prioritize public health and equity. We strongly urge the Board to delay its decision until the potential health and safety impacts of these lounges are thoroughly assessed and addressed.

For more details please see the attached letter.

In community,
Julio

Julio Neri Andrade
Director
831.359.6168 | jandrade@c2csc.org



[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)



January 23, 2025

Board of Supervisors
Santa Cruz County
701 Ocean St #500A
Santa Cruz, CA, 95060

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors,

Cradle to Career Santa Cruz County is committed to fostering healthy and thriving communities, particularly for families and youth; we are reaching out regarding the proposed ordinance changes that would allow on-site cannabis consumption lounges. While we understand the interest in exploring new economic opportunities, these changes must be carefully evaluated to prioritize public health and equity. We strongly urge the Board to delay its decision until the potential health and safety impacts of these lounges are thoroughly assessed and addressed.

Opening on-site cannabis consumption lounges is fundamentally an equity issue. Research has shown that proximity to cannabis retailers has a significant impact on youth cannabis use. The further youth live from these establishments, the less likely they are to engage in recent cannabis use. Notably, Latinx/Hispanic youth face disproportionately more significant risks, with their likelihood of recent use being significantly reduced when cannabis retailers are located farther away. This underscores the importance of policies protecting all youth, especially those from communities already facing systemic inequities.

To protect the well-being of our communities, we recommend the following measures if on-site consumption lounges are permitted:

1. Restrict Locations to Minimize Community Impact:

These establishments should be located away from sensitive areas, such as schools, parks, childcare facilities, and residential neighborhoods. Maintaining greater distances between these lounges and spaces where youth live, learn, and play is one of the most effective ways to shield them from harm.

2. Ban Indoor Smoking and Vaping:

Smoking and vaping indoors can harm patrons and staff due to secondhand smoke exposure. Prohibiting these activities aligns with public health standards and ensures a safer environment for everyone involved.

3. Adopt Comprehensive Harm Reduction Strategies:

Measures should be implemented to mitigate potential risks associated with on-site consumption. These strategies could include:

- Providing staff training to monitor consumption responsibly, offer guidance on product usage, and manage serving limits to prevent overconsumption.



- Partnering with transportation services to promote safe travel options for patrons and reduce the risk of impaired driving.
- Collaborating with law enforcement and community organizations to ensure compliance with regulations and promote public safety.

The decision to allow on-site cannabis consumption lounges has far-reaching implications for public health, safety, and equity. Delaying action to understand these impacts better will enable the Board to implement more informed and effective policies that safeguard our communities.

We appreciate your leadership and commitment to balancing economic initiatives with the health and safety of all who live, work, and play in Santa Cruz County. Thank you for considering these recommendations. We are available to provide further input or collaborate on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julio Neri Andrade".

Julio Neri Andrade
Executive Director

Cradle to Career Santa Cruz County
jandrade@c2csc.org – (831)359-6168

Subject: **Support for On-Site Cannabis Lounges at Existing Retail Locations**

Date: 01/27/25

From: Bryce Berryessa, President | Treehouse

Overview

Santa Cruz County faces an essential decision regarding cannabis consumption lounges. We strongly support option one presented in the staff report, which allows lounges co-located at dispensaries or adjoining parcels, as it strikes the best balance between supporting existing businesses, enhancing public safety, and promoting economic growth. In contrast, Options Two and Three, which permit lounges at off-site locations, would harm legacy retailers, disrupt the current market, and fail to align with the transparent public process that informed Option One.

Why Co-location For Lounges Is the Right Choice

1. Sustains Existing Businesses and Prevents Oversaturation

- Santa Cruz County already has one of the highest dispensary-to-population ratios in California.
- Allowing off-site lounges under Options Two and Three could double the number of cannabis outlets in the county, further saturating the market and endangering the viability of existing retailers.
- Legacy businesses, which already face high costs, heavy taxes, and fierce competition, would suffer as their customer base is further fragmented.

2. Encourages Responsible Consumption and Enhances Tourism

- Co-located lounges provide a safe, controlled environment for cannabis consumption, reducing risks of public use and nuisance.
- This aligns with Santa Cruz's identity as a canna-tourism destination while minimizing community pushback.

3. Backed by Transparent Public Process

- Option One is the product of a thorough public review process and has strong support from most cannabis retailers.
- Options Two and Three lack similar scrutiny and would disproportionately harm retailers in high-density areas like the 41st Avenue corridor.

4. Equitable and Feasible for All Retailers

- Option One allows almost all existing retailers to create lounges onsite or on adjoining parcels. This ensures growth opportunities without disrupting the market.
- By limiting lounges to these locations, the county avoids zoning and licensing complexities while promoting fair competition among operators.

5. Minimizes Regulatory and Administrative Burdens

- Expanding lounges offsite would require significant changes to zoning codes, licensing, and enforcement mechanisms, costing time and resources.
- Option One is a simpler, more cost-effective approach that minimizes administrative hurdles while meeting public and business needs.

Why Options Two and Three Are Problematic

1. Creates Oversaturation and Competition in High-Density Areas

Allowing off-site lounges would introduce up to 13 new outlets, disproportionately impacting areas like the 41st Avenue corridor, which already hosts the highest concentration of cannabis businesses in the county.

2. Undermines Legacy Retailers

New off-site lounges would act as additional retail points, diluting the customer base and intensifying competition for businesses already struggling to remain profitable.

3. Lacks Public Support

Unlike Option One, Options Two and Three were not subjected to the same rigorous public process and lack the broad stakeholder support necessary for successful implementation.

Recommendation

We urge the Board to adopt Option One for the following reasons:

- It provides a fair and feasible path for existing retailers to expand into lounges while preventing market oversaturation.
- A transparent public process supports it and aligns with community interests.
- It promotes responsible consumption, enhances public safety, and supports canna-tourism.
- It minimizes regulatory and administrative challenges.

Options Two and Three, on the other hand, would disrupt the market, harm legacy businesses, and contradict the county's stated goal of supporting sustainable cannabis regulation.

Conclusion

Adopting Option One ensures Santa Cruz County takes a balanced, forward-thinking approach to cannabis policy. This decision supports local businesses, protects public interests, and positions the county as a leader in responsible cannabis regulation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Bryce Berryessa
President | Treehouse
bryce@ourtreehouse.io

Subject: **Support for Amending the Cannabis Business Tax (CBT) for Economic Growth and Fair Competition**

Date: 01/27/25

From: Bryce Berryessa, President | Treehouse

Overview

This memo advocates for two critical updates to the Cannabis Business Tax (CBT):

1. Redefining “Gross Receipts” to tax only cannabis-containing items.
2. Establishing a separate, lower tax rate for cannabis consumption lounges.

These changes are essential to ensure the long-term sustainability of cannabis businesses in Santa Cruz County, particularly as retailers look to invest in new business models such as consumption lounges.

Why Redefining “Gross Receipts” Is Essential

1. Minimal Impact on County Revenue

- Non-cannabis-related sales account for less than 2% of total revenue from county dispensaries.
- Excluding these items from the CBT will have negligible fiscal impacts on the county while creating significant opportunities for business growth.

2. Encourages Investment in Consumption Lounges

- Many consumption lounges plan to generate substantial revenue from ancillary sales such as food, beverages, and entertainment.
- Applying a 7% tax to gross receipts from all revenue—including non-cannabis sales—makes these lounges financially unfeasible. Lowering this tax burden is critical to fostering their development and success.

3. Promotes Fair Competition

- Current CBT rules unfairly disadvantage cannabis retailers compared to smoke shops and specialty stores that sell similar items (e.g., pipes, rolling papers, and merchandise) but are not subject to the tax.
- Revising the tax code to exclude non-cannabis items allows cannabis retailers to expand their offerings and compete on an even playing field.

Why a Separate Tax Rate for Lounges Is Critical

1. Aligns Taxation with Revenue Sources

- Cannabis consumption lounges operate differently than retail dispensaries. Much of their revenue will come from ancillary sales, not cannabis products.
- Establishing a lower tax rate for lounges reflects this difference and supports their viability as a business model.

2. Stimulates Economic Development and Tourism

- Lowering the tax rate for lounges encourages more retailers to invest in this model, enhancing local tourism and creating new economic opportunities.
- Lounges provide a controlled, safe space for consumption, aligning with the county’s goals of promoting public safety and responsible cannabis use.

3. Consistency with State and Local Precedents

- Other jurisdictions, like Capitola, already exempt non-cannabis sales from their cannabis tax codes, providing a proven framework for Santa Cruz County to follow.

Recommendations

We urge the Board of Supervisors to:

1. Amend the Definition of Gross Receipts:
 - Exclude non-cannabis items (e.g., merchandise, food, and entertainment) from the CBT.
 - Align county practices with other jurisdictions to support retail diversification.
2. Establish a Separate, Lower Tax Rate for Lounges:
 - Create a tax rate specific to cannabis lounges that reflects their unique revenue streams and operational model. Provide a financial incentive for businesses to invest in this innovative model while fostering economic growth.

Conclusion

These proposed amendments to the CBT are vital for the future of Santa Cruz County's cannabis industry. They ensure fairness, encourage business investment, and stimulate economic growth without significantly impacting county revenue. We appreciate your consideration of these changes and look forward to working together to create a more sustainable and equitable regulatory framework.

Sincerely,
Bryce Berryessa
President | Treehouse
bryce@ourtreehouse.io

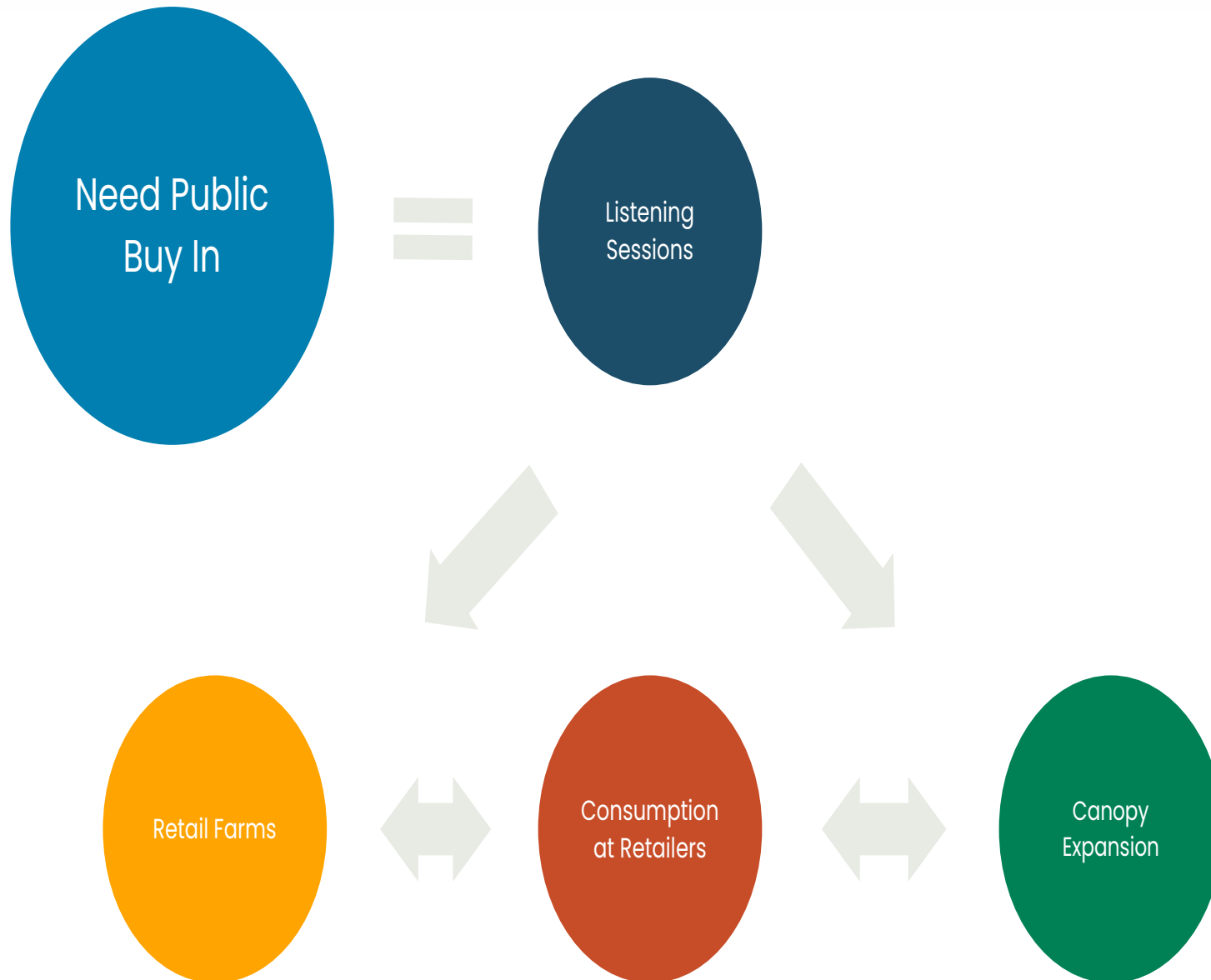


Cannabis Licensing Office

Item 11 Options for Consideration to Allow Cannabis Consumption at Retail Locations and Potential Cannabis Business Tax Revisions

Background

November 14, 2023 Board Meeting



Board Consideration of Listening Sessions

- Staff directed to draft ordinances for Board consideration



Background

October 29, 2024 Board Meeting



Draft consumption ordinance presented to the Board

Board directed staff to:

- Consider ways to extend the opportunity to have consumption lounges in more of the existing retailers.
- Consider ancillary sales.
- Examine CBT sales in retail and lounges, taxation on products consumed in lounges.

**Options for
Consideration
Regarding Locations
for Consumption
Lounges at Retail
Sites**

Option 1- Allow within Existing Retailer or in immediately Adjacent Buildings

All of the existing retailers have adequate space to explore within their existing buildings except 2 in the SLV

Size of lounges would vary

All Building would require retrofits



Option 2 – Allow within Existing Retailer or in Adjacent Buildings & Sites Previously Codified



30 previously codified sites are grouped around Dignity Hospital and Northern 41st Ave

There are 9 potential locations dispersed in Aptos

Option 3 – Allow within Existing Retailers or at Commercial Locations like Restaurants & Bars

Provide the greatest flexibility but could double the retail locations for cannabis purchases

Require changes to land use codes

Could be allowed in the C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, PA and C-T zones

Require 8-12 months to finalize code changes



**Options for
Consideration
Regarding Cannabis
Business Tax
Modification**

Cannabis Business Tax (CBT) for Lounges

Board of Supervisors has the authority to define cannabis lounges as a separate cannabis business type

- Board may set any tax rate between 0-10% for any cannabis business

CBT on Non-Cannabis Goods

All goods sold by retailers are currently taxed

Defining ancillary goods as those containing cannabis would:

- Exclude non-cannabis goods from having CBT applied

Examples of non-cannabis goods sold at retailers:

- Shirts
- Hats
- Pipes
- Lighters
- Art

Questions on taxes and lounges?

Thank You



Emerging Indoor Air Laws for Onsite Cannabis
Consumption Businesses in the U.S.

Thomas L. Roterling, MPH, Lauren K. Lempert, JD, MPH, Stanton A. Glantz, PhD

Introduction: Secondhand cannabis smoke, like secondhand tobacco smoke, creates unhealthy indoor air quality. Ventilation and engineering techniques cannot reduce this pollution to healthy levels, and complete smoke-free policies are the only way to provide healthy indoor environments. Even so, multiple state and local governments have begun to allow indoor smoking of cannabis in businesses.

Methods: A systematic search of Lexis Advance, NewsBank, and government websites for U.S. state and local laws passed between November 6, 2012 and June 10, 2020 that permit and regulate onsite cannabis consumption businesses was conducted in February–July 2020.

Results: In total, 6 of 11 states and the District of Columbia that legalized adult-use cannabis as of June 10, 2020 allowed onsite consumption and ≥ 56 localities within these 6 states allowed onsite cannabis consumption. Only 9% (5/56) of localities ban indoor smoking in these businesses; 23% (13/56) require indoor smoking to occur in physically isolated rooms. Other common local legal requirements address onsite odor control, ventilation/filtration, and building location.

Conclusions: The majority of the localities that allow onsite cannabis consumption do not explicitly prohibit smoking or vaping inside. Policymakers should be made aware that ventilation and other engineering interventions cannot fully protect workers and patrons. Health authorities and local leaders should educate policymakers on the science of secondhand smoke remediation and advocate for the same standards for secondhand cannabis smoking and vaping that apply to tobacco, particularly because other modes of cannabis administration do not pollute the air.

Am J Prev Med 2021;61(6):e267–e278. © 2021 American Journal of Preventive Medicine. Published by Elsevier Inc. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

INTRODUCTION

Smoking and vaporizing cannabis create secondhand cannabis smoke (SHCS) and unhealthy indoor air quality. Although not identical, cannabis and tobacco smoke contain many of the same toxins.¹ Cannabis joints generate 3.5 times the secondhand smoke (SHS) (measured as particulate matter less than 2.5 μm in diameter, $\text{PM}_{2.5}$) as a Marlboro cigarette.² Even vaping, which does not produce sidestream smoke, pollutes the air as much as a Marlboro.² Smoking cannabis is associated with some similar health effects as smoking tobacco, including myocardial infarction,³ ischemic stroke,^{3,4} and chronic bronchitis.⁵ SHCS impairs vascular endothelial function (a precursor to cardiovascular disease) in rats,⁶ an established model for human vascular response.⁷ SHCS results in detectable

cannabinoid levels in blood and urine among nonsmoking adults⁸ and children.⁹

Comprehensive tobacco smoke restrictions are a recognized and effective preventative health intervention.^{10,11} Comprehensive state or local 100% smoke-free laws in workplaces, restaurants, and bars covered 61% of the U.S. population as of January 2020.¹² The prevalence of secondhand tobacco smoke (SHS) exposure among U.S. nonsmokers from any source fell from 52.5% in

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0749-3797/\$36.00

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2021.05.012>

1999–2000 to 25.2% in 2013–2014,¹³ with exposure higher among non-Hispanic Blacks, people living in poverty, and people living in multiunit housing.¹⁴

Legalization of adult-use cannabis threatens clean indoor air and public health. As of June 2020, a total of 34 states and the District of Columbia (DC) had legalized medicinal cannabis, and 11 states and DC legalized adult-use cannabis¹⁵; 5 additional states legalized medicinal use, adult use, or both through a ballot initiative in November 2020.¹⁶

Although all adult-use states prohibit cannabis consumption in public, some cannabis advocates argue that this prohibition inappropriately limits the opportunity for renters, tourists, and people experiencing homelessness to legally and safely consume cannabis.¹⁷ As of June 2020, a total of 6 states addressed this issue by allowing onsite cannabis consumption at some licensed cannabis businesses by combustion or vaporization, exempting them from existing clean indoor air laws. This study defines these *onsite cannabis consumption businesses* as businesses licensed by the local or state government to permit onsite cannabis consumption in any manner in a permanent structure, with or without cannabis sales.

Although there has been some research on state laws that permit cannabis consumption businesses¹⁸ and on California local cannabis laws,¹⁹ there was no multistate analysis of local onsite consumption laws. This study analyzes state and local laws that allow onsite cannabis consumption businesses to identify how localities approach protecting clean indoor air related to cannabis. Although fully protecting patrons and employees from the health effects of secondhand exposure in smoking areas through engineering controls remains impossible,^{11,20,21} some state and local governments are using ventilation and separation requirements for cannabis smoking lounges, despite the fact that they do not fully protect workers and patrons.^{11,20,21}

Whether ventilation systems are sufficient to protect nonsmokers from the health effects of SHS has been central to debates over emerging demands to protect nonsmokers since the 1980s.^{22,23} The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) is the professional association that develops technical standards for ventilation and indoor air quality that are often incorporated into municipal building codes in the U. S. In June 2005, ASHRAE modified its Standard 62.1 to acknowledge that some places continued to allow smoking indoors even though it is not possible to produce a ventilation standard that would result in acceptable indoor air quality in smoking areas.²⁴ In the newly added Section 5.19, ASHRAE described how these areas could be constructed to avoid leakage of smoke (which now includes cannabis smoke and emissions from E-cigarettes²⁵) into smoke-free areas. In June 2005, ASHRAE also released a

position statement elaborating on Standard 62 stating, “At present, the only means of effectively eliminating health risks associated with indoor exposure [to secondhand smoke] is to ban smoking activity.”²⁶ The 2019 version of this document describes the engineering approaches that have been taken to address SHS exposure in buildings.²⁰ ASHRAE only recommends 1 engineering approach: a complete ban on indoor smoking. Consistent with ASHRAE, the U.S. Surgeon General in 2006¹¹ and WHO in 2007²¹ both acknowledged the inadequacy of ventilation to eliminate exposures of nonsmokers to SHS and recommend 100% smoke-free indoor environments.

METHODS

Study Sample

As detailed in the [Appendix](#) (available online), between February and July of 2020, a systematic legal search of Lexis Advance, NewsBank, and government websites for state and local laws that permit and regulate onsite cannabis consumption among the 11 U.S. states that have legalized adult-use cannabis was conducted. The search focused on the 274 local jurisdictions with potentially relevant laws passed between November 6, 2012 (the date of first adult-use legalization) and June 10, 2020 (the study cut off date). Within those identified, there were 56 localities that allowed onsite cannabis consumption businesses in 5 states (Alaska, California, Colorado, Illinois, Michigan).

Measures

To assess the strength of clean indoor air laws for these localities, each locality was coded into 1 of the 4 Design and Operation Approaches described in ASHRAE’s 2019 Position Document on Environmental Tobacco Smoke.²⁰ These approaches are (1) banning smoking indoors, (2) smoking only in isolated rooms, (3) smoking in separate but not isolated spaces, and (4) mixed occupancy of smokers and nonsmokers.²⁰

RESULTS

All of the 11 states and DC where adult-use cannabis has been legalized ([Table 1](#)^{27–52}) prohibit consumption in public places (i.e., places where the public has access or a person could reasonably be expected to be observed by others) but allow cannabis consumption in private residences or private property with the owner’s permission if out of public view. A total of 6 states (Alaska, California, Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Michigan) allow onsite consumption in licensed cannabis consumption businesses subject to local government approval. The remaining 5 states (Maine, Nevada, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington) and DC explicitly prohibit cannabis consumption on the premises of licensed cannabis businesses. No state pre-empts localities from implementing more rigorous regulations for onsite cannabis consumption businesses.

Table 1. Regulations on Public/Onsite Consumption and Requirements for Onsite Consumption Businesses in States That Have Legalized Adult-Use Cannabis

State code/regs section	Prohibitions		Requirements			Notable features
	Public consumption prohibited	Consumption prohibited in cannabis businesses	Separation between smoking and nonsmoking areas	Smoke-free employee viewing area	Odor, visibility outdoor controls	
Alaska AK stat. § 17.38.010 et seq. ²⁷	✓					Establishes Marijuana Control Board in the Department of Commerce as a regulatory and quasi-judicial agency. Marijuana registration issued by the Marijuana Control Board required to operate retail stores. Local government may prohibit the operation of retail marijuana stores by enacting an ordinance or by voter initiative or enact laws governing time, place, manner, and number of establishments. Established village may prohibit retail stores by majority vote. Consumption is defined as ingesting, inhaling, or otherwise introducing marijuana into the body. Businesses with an onsite consumption endorsement must be freestanding. Unless consumption is outdoors, it requires (1) the consumption area be isolated, separated by walls and a secure door; (2) a smoke-free area for employees to monitor the marijuana consumption area; and (3) a ventilation system that directs air from the marijuana consumption area to the outside of the building through a filtration system sufficient to remove visible smoke and adequate to eliminate odor at the property line. If onsite consumption by inhalation is permitted, ventilation plans must be consistent with all applicable building codes and ordinances. However, Alaska has no statewide building codes, so it is left to localities.
3 AAC 306.370 ²⁸			✓	✓	✓	
California CA Bus & Prof Code § 26200 et seq. ²⁹					✓	Localities may allow for smoking or ingesting cannabis if 3 conditions are met: (1) access restricted to age ≥21, (2) consumption not visible in public, and (3) sale or consumption of alcohol or tobacco prohibited.
CA health & safety code § 11362.3 ³⁰	✓					Prohibits smoking or ingesting cannabis in public except in accordance with CA Bus & Prof Code § 26200. ²⁹ Prohibits smoking cannabis in locations where the sale or consumption of tobacco is prohibited. Retail or wholesale tobacco shops are excluded from the state prohibition against smoking tobacco in most indoor workplaces in California (CA Labor Code § 6404.5. ³¹). Because cannabis cannot be sold where tobacco is sold, the laws may conflict because smoking is prohibited in all retail stores other than retail tobacco shops, and the exclusion allowing smoking in retail tobacco shops could not logically apply to cannabis retailers.
Colorado Colo. Const. Art. XVIII, §16 ³² C.R. S. § 44-10-702(1) ³³ HB 19-1230 ³⁴	✓					Prohibits public consumption, including smoking, eating, and vaping. Created exception to public marijuana prohibition in Constitution and C.R.S. § 44-10-702 and to Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act ³⁵ by allowing marijuana consumption at licensed marijuana hospitality and retail marijuana hospitality and sales establishments if approved by local government. Display and consumption of marijuana may not be visible from outside the licensed premises. Marijuana hospitality establishments are prohibited from admitting people aged <21 years, distributing free samples, permitting consumption by a patron who appears intoxicated, allowing on-duty employees to consume, allowing alcohol or tobacco to be consumed on premises. Must provide informational materials about the safe consumption of marijuana, must not make health claims, and must include warning statements about the harmfulness of using marijuana while pregnant, breastfeeding, or driving.
1 CCR 212–3.6–700 Series ³⁶					✓	
District of Columbia DC code § 48–911.01 ³⁷	✓	✓				Criminalizes public smoking or consumption of marijuana and impairment owing to marijuana smoking or consumption. Smoking means to inhale, ingest, or otherwise introduce marijuana into the body or to hold or carry lighted smoking equipment filled with marijuana.
Illinois						

(continued on next page)

Table 1. Regulations on Public/Onsite Consumption and Requirements for Onsite Consumption Businesses in States That Have Legalized Adult-Use Cannabis (continued)

State code/regs section	Prohibitions		Requirements			Notable features
	Public consumption prohibited	Consumption prohibited in cannabis businesses	Separation between smoking and nonsmoking areas	Smoke-free employee viewing area	Odor, visibility outdoor controls	
Illinois Public Act 101-0027 § 10–35 ³⁵	✓					Using cannabis in a public place is not permitted. Creates an exemption to Smoke Free Illinois Act to allow on-premises consumption in specially designated areas with authorization or permission from local government. Requirements for dispensing organizations with onsite consumption: (1) specially designated area for purpose of heating, burning, smoking, or lighting cannabis; (2) age ≥21 years; and (3) locked door or barrier to designated area.
410 ILCS 82/35 ³⁹					✓	
Maine		✓				Marijuana may only be consumed in the person's private residence (including curtilage) or on private property with the property owner's explicit permission. A violation carries a civil fine of up to \$100.
18–691 CMR ch.1 ⁴⁰						
MRS Title 28-B§ 508 ⁴¹	✓					Permits municipal regulation and licensing of marijuana establishments but prohibits the consumption of adult-use marijuana within licensed premises of a marijuana establishment.
Massachusetts	✓					
MGL Ch. 94G ⁴²			✓	✓		Allows local control and regulation, including prohibiting consumption on the premises. For the first 2 years, onsite consumption licenses will be awarded only to social equity and economic empowerment businesses. ⁴³
935 CMR 500.141 ⁴⁴					✓	Prohibits indoor consumption of combustible products but allows vaping and heated tobacco products (e.g., IQOS). Where vaping and other nonsmoking consumption permitted indoors, requires plans ensuring (1) that areas are isolated, separated by walls and a secure door; (2) that employees may monitor from smoke-free, vapor-free area; and (3) that ventilation system directs air from consumption area to outdoors through filtration system sufficient to remove visible vapor, consistent with building codes and ordinances and adequate to eliminate odor. Vaping may be permitted in a designated outdoor area if it cannot be viewed by the public.
Michigan	✓					Consuming marijuana in a public place or smoking marijuana in a private place where prohibited by the owner is prohibited except a public place does not include an area designated for consumption that is not accessible to persons aged <21 years and authorized by a municipality. A licensed, designated consumption establishment requires (1) smoke-free area for employees to monitor consumption area; (2) ventilation system that directs air outdoors through a filtration system sufficient to remove visible smoke, consistent with all applicable building codes and ordinances, and adequate to eliminate odor if consumption by inhalation is permitted; and (3) physical separation from areas where smoking is prohibited.
Mich. Admin. Code R 420.22 ⁴⁵			✓	✓	✓	
Nevada						
Nev. Rev Stat § 678D.310 ⁴⁷	✓					Consuming cannabis in public is a misdemeanor.
Nev. Rev Stat § 678B.510 ⁴⁸		✓				A local government is prohibited from licensing a business that allows the consumption of cannabis on its premises or allowing such a business to operate.
Oregon	✓	✓				Unlawful to use marijuana in a public place.
Or. Rev Stat § 475B.381 ⁴⁹						
Vermont	✓	✓				Unlawful to consume marijuana in a public place, including places of public accommodation (e.g., schools, restaurants, stores) or where tobacco products or tobacco substitutes (e.g., E-cigarettes) are prohibited.
18 V.S.A. § 4230a ⁵⁰						
Washington	✓	✓				Consumption is prohibited in public places.
RCW 69.50.445 ⁵¹						
RCW 69.50.357 ⁵²		✓				Consumption is prohibited at licensed retail marijuana outlets.

Alaska permits onsite cannabis consumption licensing and regulation on a statewide level through its Alcohol and Marijuana Control Board, as long as incorporated local governments do not protest (veto) these establishments. Local governments in Alaska also have the authority to add their own regulations related to onsite consumption on top of state requirements. California, Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts, and Michigan prohibit onsite consumption unless authorized by local government and allow localities to impose regulations beyond state requirements. In California, onsite consumption businesses must first obtain a California state license to dispense cannabis and must meet 3 basic requirements: access must be restricted to adults aged ≥ 21 years (consistent with that in all the 6 states that allow onsite consumption), consumption must not be visible in public; and the sale or consumption of alcohol or tobacco is prohibited. Colorado and Vermont prohibit cannabis consumption where tobacco or alcohol is prohibited.

The 6 states that allow onsite cannabis consumption impose various other regulations. A total of 3 states (Alaska, Massachusetts, and Michigan) require physical separation between cannabis smoking and nonsmoking areas, separate ventilation systems, and a smoke-free area for employees to monitor the consumption area. These states also require local regulations to control cannabis odors outside the premises and ensure that consumption areas are not visible from outside the premises. Illinois requires cannabis businesses to install air treatment systems to reduce odors. All the 6 states restrict access to adults aged ≥ 21 years. None of these requirements have been proven effective in creating healthy indoor air quality or in eliminating SHCS exposure.

Illinois' 2008 Smoke Free Illinois Act was amended to allow onsite cannabis consumption in a designated area of cannabis dispensaries or retail tobacco stores even though it acknowledges ASHRAE's conclusion that "the only means of eliminating health risks associated with indoor exposure is to eliminate all smoking activity indoors" and the Environmental Protection Agency's determination that SHS "cannot be reduced to safe levels in businesses with high rates of ventilation."⁵³ By contrast, Alaska allows ventilation without specific requirements, specifying that if localities permit indoor consumption by inhalation, their ventilation plans must be consistent with applicable building codes,⁵⁴ which are determined by localities.

California's law (Business and Professions Code Section 26,200) permitting onsite smoking, vaping, and ingestion of cannabis (except where tobacco or alcohol is sold) seems to conflict with its law (Labor Code Section 6,404.5) prohibiting smoking in most indoor workplaces. Smoking tobacco is permitted in retail tobacco

shops, but cannabis cannot be sold where tobacco is sold,²⁹ suggesting that smoking cannabis would be prohibited in all retail shops, including cannabis stores.

Illinois explicitly permits retail tobacco stores to allow onsite consumption of cannabis in specially designated areas if authorized by the local government.³⁹ A total of 4 states (Alaska,²⁸ California,²⁹ Colorado,⁵⁵ and Massachusetts⁴⁴) explicitly prohibit tobacco consumption on the premises of cannabis consumption businesses, and Michigan prohibits smoking tobacco in places of employment, which includes onsite cannabis consumption businesses.⁵⁶ Although Massachusetts prohibits indoor consumption of combustible cannabis products, it allows cannabis to be consumed indoors through vaporization or other nonsmoking forms of consumption involving heat.

Of the 274 local jurisdictions included in the sample from 11 states and DC where adult-use cannabis is legal, 56 in 5 states (Alaska, California, Colorado, Illinois, and Michigan) allowed onsite consumption of cannabis in a licensed business under local laws. Although Massachusetts allows localities to permit onsite cannabis consumption businesses, no local laws allowing them were identified. The remaining 218 localities either explicitly prohibit or are silent on onsite cannabis consumption in licensed businesses.

The analysis below covers the 56 localities that permit onsite cannabis consumption businesses. These local laws should be interpreted in the context of corresponding state laws that establish minimum requirements. For example, even though the Grand Rapids, Michigan law is silent on ventilation or filtration systems, all licensed consumption establishments there must comply with state law that includes a ventilation system requirement.

Table 2⁵⁷ summarizes the local requirements for onsite cannabis consumption businesses. Each locality was categorized into 1 of ASHRAE's 4 Design and Operation Approaches.²⁰ Only 9% (5/56) of the localities that permit onsite cannabis consumption ban indoor cannabis smoking and vaping in cannabis businesses, restricting consumption to outdoor areas or only permitting edible consumption indoors. In total, 23% (13/56) of the localities require indoor smoking and vaping to be in isolated rooms only, meaning that the smoking and nonsmoking areas are physically separated so that smoke cannot drift to the nonsmoking areas.

In total, 16% (9/56) of the localities require smoking to be in separate or designated areas but do not require physical isolation. These places may allow smoking and nonsmoking areas to be in a single larger space or to be serviced by the same air handling system. In this situation, engineering may reduce irritation or odor but cannot effectively limit exposure in nonsmoking areas. In

Table 2. Local Legal Requirements for Cannabis Consumption Businesses in States That Allow Any Public Consumption

Locality	2019 Population estimates ^a	Design and operation approaches ²⁰					Additional local code features ^b					
		Indoor smoking ban	Smoking only in isolated rooms ^c	Smoking in separate but not isolated spaces	No separation requirements ^d	Odor control at property line	Ventilation or filtration system required	Consumption of tobacco is prohibited	Forms of indoor consumption prohibited	Freestanding building	Indoor consumption only	Outdoor consumption only
Alaska												
Anchorage (unified)	288,000	X				X	X		X	S, V	X	
Fairbanks	30,917				X							
Fairbanks North Star borough	96,849				X							
Juneau (unified)	31,974	X								S, V		S, V
California												
Adelanto	34,049	X					X					
Alameda	77,624	X				X		X		S, V	X	
Berkeley	121,363	X				X	X	X				
Calistoga	39,825				X	X	X	X				
Cathedral City	55,007			X		X	X	X			X	
Coachella	45,743				X	X	X	X				
Colton	54,824				X	X	X	X				
Eureka	26,710	X				X		X				
Hayward	159,203				X	X		X				
Humboldt County	135,558				X			X				
Lemoore	26,725			X		X	X	X				
Lompoc	42,853				X	X	X			E		
Mendocino County	86,749	X								S, V, E		S, V, E
Oakland	433,031				X	X				S		
Palm Springs	48,518			X		X		X			X	
Point arena	449				X					S		
San Francisco	881,549	X				X	X	X				
San Jacinto	49,215				X	X		X				
San Leandro	88,815				X	X	X	X				
Santa Rosa	176,753	X				X	X	X		S, V		S, V if ≥25ft from the building
Sebastopol	7,674				X		X	X				
Union City	74,107				X		X	X		S ^c , V ^c		
Weed	2,725				X							
West Hollywood	36,475			X			X	X				
Colorado												
Black-hawk	128				X		X	X				
Colorado Springs	478,221				X		X					

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Table 2. Local Legal Requirements for Cannabis Consumption Businesses in States That Allow Any Public Consumption (continued)

Locality	2019 Population estimates ^a	Design and operation approaches ²⁰				Additional local code features ^b						
		Indoor smoking ban	Smoking only in isolated rooms ^c	Smoking in separate but not isolated spaces	No separation requirements ^d	Odor control at property line	Ventilation or filtration system required	Consumption of tobacco is prohibited	Forms of indoor consumption prohibited	Freestanding building	Indoor consumption only	Outdoor consumption only
Denver	727,211			X		X						
Glendale	5,441				X		X					
Illinois												
Carpentersville	37,254		X						X			
Collinsville	21,652				X	X				X		
E. Dundee	3,216				X							
Fox Lake	9,963				X							
Gilman	1,652		X						X			
Indian Head park	3,719		X						X			
Island lake	8,020		X						X			
Jacksonville	18,603		X						X			
Macomb	17,413				X			S ^f , V ^f , E ^f				
Pingree grove	9,874		X						X			
Rochelle	9,052		X						X			
Springfield	114,230				X	X						
Wheeling	38,646			X								
Michigan												
Ann Arbor	119,980				X	X				X		
Buchanan	4,263	X				X		S, V				
Clark township	1,976				X	X	X			X		
Grand Rapids	201,013				X							
Kalamazoo	76,200			X		X	X					
Lansing	118,210			X		X	X					
Marquette	20,995			X		X	X					
Muskegon	36,565				X	X	X					
Niles	11,149		X			X	X					
Wise township	1,385				X							
Ypsilanti	20,171				X						X	

Note: A copy of this table, including citations, is available in the Appendix (available online) to the online version of this article at <http://www.ajpm.org>.

^a2019 population estimates from census.gov.⁵⁷

^bLocation requirements: S (combustion), V (includes heating of liquid or solid cannabis), and E.

^cOnly San Francisco, California, and Niles, Michigan include requirements for isolating smoking rooms that match some of the technical requirements in ASHRAE Standard 62.1 Section 5.19.

^dThis is what ASHRAE calls mixed occupancy between smokers and nonsmokers.

^eAdult-use cannabis is prohibited, but medicinal is allowed here.

^fMedicinal Cannabis is prohibited, but Adult-Use is allowed here.

ASHRAE, American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Engineers; E, edibles; S, smoking; V, vaporization.

total, 52% (29/56) across all the 5 states do not require separation between smoking and nonsmoking areas. Under this approach, which ASHRAE calls mixed occupancy of smokers and nonsmokers,²⁰ smoking may be allowed throughout the space, and there is no effort to isolate smokers.

Odor control at the property line of cannabis businesses (Table 3) was the most popular local law requirement, with 59% (33/56) of localities requiring either a specific odor control technical requirement (e.g., carbon air filters or controlled air pressure) or a general requirement that odor should not be detectable outside the business. In total, 21 localities (38%) require some form of ventilation or filtration system where onsite consumption is permitted. This requirement varies considerably, from Berkeley, California that mandates that a smoking room should have a “ventilation system capable of removing all detectable odors, smoke and by-products of combustion”⁵⁸ to Adelanto, California that simply asks that smoking lounges be well ventilated.⁵⁹

Localities also limit what kinds of products may be used onsite. In total, 29% (16/56) prohibit any consumption of tobacco onsite. In total, 80% (45/56) allow all forms of indoor cannabis consumption, whereas the remaining 20% (11/56) prohibit ≥ 1 form of cannabis consumption.

In total, 14% (8/56) of localities require that the building where cannabis consumption occurs be freestanding, meaning that it does not share a wall or connection with another building, to stop smoke from migrating into adjacent buildings. Doing so would stop smoke from migrating into adjacent buildings via passages, ventilation systems, plumbing, or walls.

In total, 13% (7/56) of the localities require all forms of consumption to be indoors, eliminating the possibility that a business in these areas would move consumption outdoors. By contrast, 5% (3/56) of the localities restrict smoking and vaping of cannabis in licensed businesses to outdoor areas only, presumably resolving indoor air quality concerns.

DISCUSSION

There is wide variation in how state and local governments address SHCS exposure in cannabis consumption businesses. Although the only effective means of preventing the health problems associated with SHCS is to require a smoke-free environment,^{11,20,21} most local laws that permit onsite cannabis consumption businesses either do not address SHCS or use ineffective ventilation or engineering requirements.

The 56 identified localities fell across the spectrum of Design and Operation Approaches described by

Table 3. Features of the 56 Local Laws Allowing Onsite Cannabis Consumption Businesses

Features	State					Total, n (%)
	AK	CA	CO	IL	MI	
Design and operations approaches						
Indoor smoking ban	1	3	0	0	1	5 (9)
Smoking only in isolated rooms	1	4	0	7	1	13 (23)
Smoking in separate but not isolated spaces	0	4	1	1	3	9 (16)
No separation requirements	2	13	3	5	6	29 (52)
Odor control at property line	1	19	3	2	8	33 (59)
Ventilation or filtration system required	1	13	1	0	6	21 (38)
Consumption of tobacco prohibited onsite	1	13	1	0	1	16 (29)
Restrictions placed on adult-use and/or medicinal smoking, vaping, or ingestion	2	7	0	1	1	11 (20)
Freestanding building	1	0	0	7	0	8 (14)
Indoor consumption only	0	3	0	1	3	7 (13)
Outdoor consumption only	1	2	0	0	0	3 (5)

AK, Alaska; CA, California; CO, Colorado; IL, Illinois; MI, Michigan.

ASHRAE,²⁰ with only 9% (5/56) requiring that indoors be smoke-free (including vaping and other inhaled forms of cannabis). The 23% (13/56) of local governments that provide for smoking in isolated rooms only do so through functional requirements, requiring that smoke not drift to nonsmoking areas or that there be a smoke-free employee viewing area. This approach can control cannabis smoke exposure in nonsmoking spaces in the same building if executed properly but does not protect employees and patrons from SHCS exposure in smoking areas. The remaining local approaches do not protect nonsmokers from SHCS because they do not require physical separation of smoking and nonsmoking areas.²⁰ They resemble the tobacco industry's accommodation framework by inviting smoke inside and positioning ventilation or engineering controls as solving SHS.^{22,60}

Ventilation system requirements are often vague, requiring systems to remove visible smoke, remove smoke, or provide reasonable mechanical smoke elimination. These requirements ignore the fact that ventilation cannot eliminate the health risks from SHS exposure when smoking is present.^{11,20,21}

In total, 77% (43/56) of the localities that allow onsite consumption are in states that prohibit tobacco consumption at onsite cannabis consumption businesses (Alaska, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, and Michigan). From an air quality perspective, there is no distinction between cannabis smoke and tobacco smoke, but this provision may discourage the co-use of tobacco and cannabis. Cannabis use predicts tobacco use onset,⁶¹ and co-use is associated with higher toxicant exposure⁶² and decreased smoking cessation.⁶³ Illinois allows tobacco and cannabis to be consumed at the same business location, and no local laws in Illinois prohibiting this activity were found.

A requirement that onsite cannabis consumption businesses operate in freestanding buildings would limit smoke contamination of adjacent buildings but does nothing for the business's occupants. Requiring cannabis consumption to be indoors only may keep consumption out of the public eye but does not prevent all the harms from SHCS. Alternatively, local code requirements to keep cannabis consumption exclusively outdoors may serve to normalize smoking if in public view.

This study contributes to a growing body of literature concerning onsite cannabis consumption businesses. These findings expand on those of previous studies that identified onsite cannabis consumption laws in 3 states¹⁸ (Alaska, California, and Colorado) and 27 California local governments¹⁹ (using a different methodology), and this study is the first to examine state and local laws

in Illinois and Michigan and to characterize the strength and characteristics of each local law.

The growing number of localities permitting onsite cannabis consumption businesses to bypass clean indoor air laws is concerning from a disease prevention perspective. Some advocates argue that designating indoor locations for renters, tourists, and people experiencing homelessness to smoke or vape cannabis is the only reasonable alternative to illegally consuming in public or exposing nonsmokers to SHCS. However, similar to tobacco,⁶⁴ by normalizing indoor smoking and exposing employees and customers to SHCS, these businesses may promote more smoking and fail to reduce overall exposure to SHCS. State and local governments have an opportunity to model strong preventative health standards by banning indoor smoking and vaping in onsite cannabis consumption businesses. Despite the challenge inherent in maintaining strong clean indoor air laws in the face of the increasingly powerful cannabis industry,⁶⁵ health advocates must ensure that public health is protected.⁶⁶ State and local laws should reflect the reality that ventilation, odor control, and other engineering features cannot adequately protect the public and employees from SHCS.^{11,20,21}

Reasonable alternatives to permitting indoor cannabis smoking and vaping may include permitting outside, out-of-view cannabis use at retailers or allowing only the use of non-inhalable modes of administration that do not pollute the air. If all onsite use is prohibited, local governments may encourage multiunit housing or other places serving these groups with fewer options (i.e., renters, the unhoused, and tourists) to create outdoor, designated smoking areas out of view of the public. To avoid conflicts with tobacco prevention program efforts around smoke-free multiunit housing, it is important that all indoor areas remain smoke free. If smoking or vaping is permitted indoors, smoking rooms must be completely isolated from nonsmoking areas as specified in ASHRAE Standard 62.1 Section 5.19 so that people are exposed to the least amount of SHCS possible.

Limitations

The study only examines the fully enacted laws passed by June 10, 2020 and does not include ballot initiatives from 4 states (Arizona, Montana, New Jersey, and South Dakota) that legalized adult-use cannabis in November 2020 or subsequent legalization in other states. These laws have not yet been implemented, making it impossible to determine whether onsite consumption businesses will be permitted. How onsite consumption laws are being implemented and enforced was outside the study scope. Laws governing cannabis consumption lounges

on tribal lands such as those allowed on the Las Vegas Tribe of Paiute Indian land⁶⁷ were not included because they fall outside state governance.

CONCLUSIONS

Onsite cannabis consumption businesses are subject to a broad range of unique state and local requirements. Unfortunately, most state and local laws that allow onsite consumption do not protect clean indoor air. Strong smoke-free cannabis laws, such as smoke-free tobacco laws, can reduce the health burdens of SHCS. Policymakers may be unaware that ventilation and other engineering interventions cannot fully protect workers and patrons. Health authorities and local leaders should educate policymakers on the science of SHS remediation and advocate for the same standards for secondhand cannabis smoking and vaping that apply to tobacco, particularly because other cannabis administration modes do not pollute the air. Where onsite smoking or vaping is permitted, even measures such as truly separate indoor and outdoor smoking areas may reduce but not eliminate SHCS exposure to patrons, staff, and residents.

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TLR developed the study design; collected, analyzed, and interpreted local and state laws; and drafted the initial manuscript. LKL collected and interpreted state laws and assisted in drafting and revising the manuscript. SAG obtained funding, oversaw the study procedure, and reviewed and revised the manuscript. TLR contributed to the study conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, data curation, and visualization and to the writing (original draft preparation) of the paper. LKL contributed to the study methodology, formal analysis, investigation, and visualization and to the writing (review and editing) of the paper. SAG contributed to the study conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, resources, visualization, supervision, and project administration and to the writing (review and editing) of the paper.

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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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JGL', is positioned above the printed name.

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

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

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 \$150- 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

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

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

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

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.

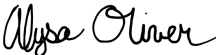
Costs, Resources, and Limits

- 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,

Signed by:



15D9DF4D3B25468...

Signed by:



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Signed by:



C34FDB079B6B4A3...

Signed by:



CE210DD93FC6423...

Signed by:



DE13D09FB1FA40C...

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

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

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

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

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.

The information contained in this message is intended only for the recipient, and may be a confidential communication or may otherwise be privileged and confidential and protected from disclosure. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, or an employee or agent responsible for delivering this message to the intended recipient, please be aware that any dissemination or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please immediately notify me by replying to the message and deleting it from your computer.

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

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

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 Cannibas lounges
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 2:15:56 PM

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

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



A Coalition Established by
RESPONSIBILITY.ORG

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](#)

