

Dear Honorable Members of the Board,

As the Commission on Alcohol and Other Drugs, we are writing to formally recommend that the Board of Supervisors not increase the number or types of cannabis businesses — including dispensaries, cultivation sites, and related operations — within Unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County per the [Commercial Cannabis Business License Program](#) at this time.

This recommendation is informed by substantial community feedback, public health concerns, and the lived experiences of our constituents. While we recognize the legality of cannabis in California and the potential for tax revenue, we believe the negative impacts associated with the current and proposed expansion outweigh the benefits. The following points reflect our shared concerns:

1. Lack of Direct Community Benefit from Tax Revenue

The proposed ordinance fails to guarantee that a specific portion of cannabis tax revenue will be allocated to programs that directly serve the communities most impacted by cannabis operations. Without dedicated reinvestment into youth development, education, behavioral health services, and community safety, the ordinance lacks a clear mechanism for restorative or preventative support.

2. Disproportionate Impact on Marginalized Communities

Our review of the GIS mapping and zoning information reveals that a significant number of proposed locations for cannabis businesses are concentrated in historically underserved, low-income Black and Latino neighborhoods. These communities are already experiencing rapid development and displacement pressures. The saturation of cannabis businesses in these areas reinforces harmful stereotypes and raises concerns about environmental justice and equity.

3. Public Health and Youth Behavioral Health Risks

Research and community testimony indicate that increased cannabis access is associated with rising rates of youth cannabis use, anxiety, depression, and decreased life satisfaction. “Ease of access to substances has been shown to have a direct and significant relationship with substance use for school-aged children.” (NIH, 2016). These trends are alarming, particularly as we seek to support the behavioral health and resilience of our youth in the post-pandemic era. The presence of cannabis businesses near youth-sensitive zones—such as schools, parks, apartment complexes, malls, and religious institutions—poses an added risk.

4. Quality-of-Life and Neighborhood Impacts

Cannabis businesses change the character and social fabric of neighborhoods. Common issues include strong odors, increased foot traffic, and the normalization of drug use among young

people. We have seen firsthand the cumulative impact of these businesses in communities like Sylmar, where oversaturation has led to long-term consequences for youth and families.

Recommendations

Should the Board move forward with any cannabis-related policy changes, we strongly urge the following:

- Establish a mandatory percentage of cannabis tax revenue to be reinvested in youth services and public health initiatives in impacted areas.
- Enforce strict visibility and odor-control regulations, including limitations on signage, lighting, branding, and marketing.
- Expand the definition of “youth-sensitive areas” to include churches, major streets connected to schools, multi-family housing, shopping centers, and youth-serving institutions.
- Implement a moratorium or cap on the number of new cannabis licenses in economically disadvantaged and under-resources/served communities, or have a history of being disproportionately affected by any of the [social drivers of health \(SDOH\)](#).

In closing, the County Commission stands in **firm opposition** to the expansion of cannabis businesses at this time. We urge the Board of Supervisors to prioritize the health, safety, and well-being of our most vulnerable communities, residents and especially the youth population. Additionally, we urge the Board of Supervisors to pursue policies that build stronger, more resilient communities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.