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cchealth.org

February 18, 2025

City Hall / Council Chambers
1000 Gateway Avenue
San Pablo, CA 94806

Dear Mayor Cruz, Vice Mayor Pabon-Alvarado, Councilmembers Xavier, Pineda and Ponce,

My name is Jorge Flores. I am from Contra Costa Health and serve as the Cannabis Prevention Program Manager. I am writing regarding the AGENDA ITEM No. 25-038.

Safeguarding youth from the sale of Cannabis in The City of San Pablo is a significant step forward in deterring youth from cannabis use. Use of substances at a young age, when the brain is still developing, can lead to a lifetime of addiction. When youth protections are set in the ordinance, there will be fewer young people who have access to these harmful substances because they are not being exposed to them.

Implementing and maintaining robust youth protections as part of the city's cannabis retail policy development ensures that cannabis businesses operate responsibly and without undue influence on youth, which is critical to safeguarding the health, safety, and well-being of the community.

Best practices in protecting youth from Cannabis and 2nd Hand Smoke are as follows:

1. Restrict Advertising and Billboards

To minimize exposure to cannabis-related advertising, it is recommended that the city prohibit or strictly limit cannabis-related billboards and other outdoor advertising. Research shows that such advertising can normalize and glamorize cannabis use among young people, increasing the risk of early use.

Sarvet AL, Wall MM, Fink DS, et al. Medical marijuana laws and adolescent marijuana use in the United States: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Addiction*. 2018; **113**: 1003-1016.

Smart R, Pacula RL. Early evidence of the impact of cannabis legalization on cannabis use, cannabis use disorder, and the use of other substances: findings from state policy evaluations. *Am J Drug Alcohol Abuse*. 2019; **45**: 644-663.

2. **Maintain Appropriate Distance from Youth-Sensitive Areas**

It is vital to enforce strict buffer zones between cannabis retail dispensaries and youth-sensitive areas such as schools, parks, daycare centers, and recreational facilities. This ensures that these establishments do not become easily accessible or visible to minors. Such as 1,000 ft. from other retailers, schools, churches, youth service facilities, recreation facilities, substance abuse recovery centers

3. **Density and Oversaturation Controls**

Another critical step is to limit the number of dispensaries within close proximity to one another. Oversaturation can lead to normalized exposure and increased visibility of cannabis businesses, particularly in areas frequented by youth.

4. **Onsite Consumption**

Ideally, 100% smoke-free/vape-free indoors

1. Ventilation systems are not sufficient to address the health concerns of indoor smoking
2. Barriers with plexiglass or semi-permanent structures are not adequate to address health concerns with secondhand marijuana smoke
3. Provide an outdoor space for smoking that is unenclosed and out of public view
4. If not restricted to outdoor use only – MUST BE located in stand-alone buildings as to avoid drifting secondhand smoke into adjacent businesses or residences in the same building
5. Stand-alone buildings should not be multi-use with other businesses or residences in the same building
6. Set a cap on the total number of licenses available for venues to allow on-site consumption
7. Narrowly define cannabis consumption establishments to only permit on-premises use of devices that are sold or owned by the establishment. This prevents non-cannabis retail or hospitality venues like restaurants or bars from allowing on-site consumption by claiming to be cannabis consumption lounges.
8. Food and alcohol sales or consumption are not permitted. Food and alcohol sales blur the lines with restaurants and bars and can result in a de facto rollback in longstanding smokefree protections.

By incorporating these protective measures, the City of San Pablo can create a balanced approach to cannabis regulation that supports adult access while shielding young residents from undue influence.

Contra Costa Health Cannabis Prevention Program is readily available to provide technical assistance and resources to city staff.

Sincerely,
Jorge Flores
Cannabis Prevention Program Manager
Contra Costa Health