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 Subject: No Commercial Cannabis

Cannabis Comments C/O Matt Johnston
 Planning Department
 701 Ocean Street, 4th Floor
 Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Santa Cruz County,

Regarding the commercial growing and production of cannabis:

As a rural resident of Santa Cruz County I am vehemently opposed to the wide scale commercial growing of cannabis in our county. I understand that there are potential financial benefits to the county, but I believe the cost to outlying communities and ultimately the general county residents will far outweigh any possible benefits. I live in an area where Cannabis growing has increased substantially, legal or not I don't know, but I presume not entirely legal, and I have already experienced some of the negative effects associated with growing operations. These effects have been increased criminal activities, including illegal grows and related busts and shootings, chronic nighttime roadside shooting, gang activity, dumping, suspicious activity and an increase of seemingly out-of-place individuals.

Currently Calaveras county is grappling with this issue. They have legalized commercial growing but are now having many issues related to the sharp increase in demands on county resources and are having to find resolution to these issues. There is still quite a lot of illegal grows and there has been a substantial increase in cleanup costs to the county.

Please see this article: <http://www.uniondemocrat.com/localnews/5250854-151/cannabis-and-calaveras-county>

I have stated below several topics that I expect will become a chronic and negative affect of commercial legalization:

1. **CRIME:** As a mountain resident for over 23 years I have seen a sharp uptick in grow-related activity, criminal and suspicious activity, the related law enforcement actions, and shooting. We have directly experienced an increase in roadside shooting and gang activity in our mountain region related to pot farms. Many of which are illegal. Marijuana farming will bring many more undesirable people, activities and crime to the county, regardless of the regulatory intent. I understand that there are those that will grow in an environmentally effective way with respect to their neighbors, the surrounding environment and regulatory efforts. I would have no issue with them. However, my fear is that it will be the dodgers, scammers and criminally inclined that descend on our county once word gets out. People who will push the legal boundaries or outright disregard them to the level of criminality. The negative effects of these attitudes will permeate the surrounding communities with an increase of criminal behavior.
2. **COST:** Even though there will be revenue generated from the legalization of commercial grows, there will also be a steep cost in enforcement, and higher demand on the county's criminal justice system including police. This cost is hidden and will be borne by all county residents. Unfortunately, for all the law abiding growers, there will be many who are not. These people will bring crime and other drug issues to the county, further exacerbating problems that already exist.
3. **ENVIRONMENTAL COST:** The water supply of the county will be placed in jeopardy by the high demands of Marijuana plants, but more importantly, by the massive chemical use that will be prevalent on commercial grows. Focusing on those who will take advantage of this opportunity, there will be more agricultural runoff in our streams and rivers including pesticides and herbicides.
4. **RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY DEVALUATION:** As a land and homeowner, a non-grower in the county, our right to quiet enjoyment will be undermined. If a pot grow were to begin on an adjacent lot we would be subjected to all the related issues that I've said above, plus the extremely strong odor which will permeate everything surrounding a grow site. Currently there is a very strong pot smell associated with the property of our neighbors who currently grow on their land (legal or illegal I don't know). During harvest time the smell wafts all the way to our home, which is a couple thousand feet away, and uphill. I can't imagine the stench we'd have to endure if it were next to us. It would be unbearable, a severe detriment to our quality of life and right to quiet enjoyment. Pot smell is not necessarily bad in low concentrations, but in high concentrations, it is sickening. All surrounding landowners and homeowners will be subjected to that odor regardless of their like or dislike of the smell.
5. **FIRE RISK:** The risk to us and our neighbors will increase. Even though many growers may install their operations in a code abiding manner, it's the many who do not that pose a real risk. We've recently had fires where the probable cause was bad wiring associated with illegal grows. In this way commercial grows, or more specifically, the increase in related illegal grows, can pose a very real danger to life and property.
6. **ENFORCEMENT:** The EIR states that there is only 2 enforcement officers allotted to the county. The county will need at least 20 to be effective. Illegal growers know this very well and will easily dodge enforcement efforts, especially those in the back country, like where we live.

Last and most important is that I have great fear to my and my family's own safety, who's safety and wellbeing I am charged to defend. It is clear, based on the issues found in Calaveras County, and in our own experience living here on the mountain, that criminal activity will increase regardless of regulation. In our area we're central to known and substantial gang activity located in San Jose and Watsonville. It will be these people, and other willfully noncompliant individuals and groups who will take advantage of

the new grow opportunities. They will not do this legally. They will hide within legal grows, and on the outskirts, and be the ones going rogue. Our mountain areas are perfect for them to hide in and our exposure to crime will increase because of this. What are we to do in this situation? In our rural location we already have limited access to law enforcement resources as it currently stands. They are in no way lax; on the contrary, they are very responsive. However, the time delay in those personnel reaching our location is never less than 20 minutes at best, often 30 minutes or more if sheriff's deputies are tied up with other calls. This is an eternity if an emergency were to occur, specifically trespass or criminal activity. Because of this I will be compelled to prepare accordingly for a much higher level of personal security. This means attaining high powered tactical weapons and gear to defend our personal safety on home and land, and training in their use. I would really like not to do this but now feel urgently compelled to do so.

In summary, looking at the same issues in Calaveras County, the likely problem that will result from a full legalization of commercial cannabis growing is a sharp increase in related ancillary crime and lawlessness. These effects will outweigh the proposed benefits in the long term, saddling the county with all the related costs. Please review the issues currently being faced by Calaveras County, it is telling as to what Santa Cruz County can expect.

-If this testimony shall become a matter of public access, please redact my personal identifying information. Thank you.-

Thank you very much for your time,

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