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**TO: Supervisor Bob Nelson, Chair
Members, Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors**

**RE: Board of Supervisor Meeting, September 14, 2021
Items: D 3 & 4, Cannabis Permitting Ordinance Amendments**

First and foremost we appreciate the *purposeful direction* of the Board of Supervisors over the past two years, especially the demanding and necessary work of the County's Department of Planning and Development.

Local policy of "certainty" is working.

It has created a level of **certainty** among farmers that has directly contributed in launching cannabis as the second highest cash producing crop in the County - estimated at over **\$250 million dollars** in 2020 cultivating approximately **400** acres. Moreover, whether intentional or not, the policy of "**certainty**" has enabled cannabis farmers to better plan their workforce needs during these unprecedented times of public health crisis, unpredictable wildfires and drought conditions. Workforce estimates for sun grown cannabis farmers are somewhat stabilizing between **3,000 to 5,000 in total employment**.

State policy changes creating a period of "uncertainty".

However, this year the state launched a comprehensive effort to consolidate several cannabis oversight agencies and it has caused a significant amount of uncertainty as to when and how the new California **Department of Cannabis Control (DCC)** will interact with the cannabis community, county and municipal governments.

Last week the **California Office of Administrative Law** began the review of the *new emergency regulations* affecting every aspect of the supply-chain. It was only a month ago that a major state agency preparing for the transition had a computer glitch and their rule-making process changed and accidentally kicked out compliant cannabis farmers waiting for a normal review to receive a renewal license.

County Cannabis Ordinance is Working

We are sharing these real-life scenarios and dramatic policy changes at the state level to underscore the point that the **current ordinance and recent amendments are working well** and now is not the time to consider significant changes that could have unintended consequences on the administrative delays for approval, total taxes and fees collected and operators incurring additional costs during a time of “**uncertainty**”.

Facts

To date **less than 5%** of the *Santa Rita Hills AVA* acreage is being toiled for cannabis cultivation. Permitted and licensed cannabis farmers are fiercely committed to *sustainable practices - land and water conservation, using the power of the sun for harvesting, installing odor technology and abatement programs and deploying natural landscaping features* to capture and reduce aromas from the plant. There are no material odor issues in North County.

Unintended Consequences

Previous Cannabis Amendments adopted by the Board of Supervisors have affected cannabis applicants, operators and farmers in a variety of ways, some lost their property investments with prohibitions in Ag I and certain EDRN's and others have had to significantly modify their projects and incur additional costs to adhere to the new requirements when a cannabis farm has 50% or more of the total parcel acreage proposed to grow cannabis, it must follow the *Conditional Use Permit (CUP)* process.

Two clear results of this work in progress is the vast majority of cannabis farmers are not yet cultivating and the County is very close to reaching the CAP.

The Future is Bright

With the advent of federal legalization of cannabis being passed by the US Congress on the horizon it is vital that policies considered by the County do not have unintended consequences that places our very own cannabis farmers at a competitive disadvantage when interstate commerce is legal.

Please hesitate to call Amy Steinfeld, if you need additional information at 805-335-0614.

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