

Fallbrook Community Planning Group
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Open Letter to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors
Terra Lawson- Remer District 3/Chair
Monica Montgomery Steppe- District 4/Vice Chair
Paloma Aguirre, District 1/Chair ProTem
Joel Anderson, District 2
Jim Desmond, District 5

There are over 500,000 residents in the County's unincorporated areas. County Planning Groups are elected by those residents to represent them and advise the County on land use issues. Sponsor Groups are appointed for the same purpose. So it was shocking when the will of these residents was completely ignored at the January 14, 2026 meeting of the Board of Supervisors.

At this meeting the Socially Equitable Cannabis Program was presented to the Supervisors by Staff for their direction on three options. The fourth option was to discontinue the Program.

Planning and Sponsor Groups have consistently voiced opposition to this Program, which is being forced on all of the unincorporated areas in the County of San Diego. .

This program would give those who have convictions and were affected by the war on drugs preferential treatment and grants to start cannabis businesses in the unincorporated areas. It would allow cultivation, labs, dispensaries, lounges, events and other cannabis related businesses in the entire unincorporated San Diego County.

At the meeting, three of the five Supervisors completely disregarded the strong opposition to this program presented by the people who live in the unincorporated areas and the Planning and Sponsor Groups who represent them. In fact, those Supervisors weren't even willing to compromise when presented with documented safety, health and environmental concerns. They voted to direct Staff to develop an option that according to their own Environmental Impact Report would have the most environmental impacts, which could not be mitigated.

It should be noted that the three Supervisors who voted in favor of developing the Program, live in cities and have limited unincorporated areas in their districts. They represent very few of the 500,000 residents. The implications are very clear.

On the other hand, the two Supervisors who voted no, have the most unincorporated areas in their district and recognized the overwhelming opposition to this Program from the residents who will suffer the environmental and safety impacts that this Program will bring.

To be clear, the opposition is not about marijuana itself. It is not about using marijuana. This is legal in the state of California. Most of the Planning Groups are not opposed to dispensaries.

This is about two separate issues. 1. Equity for those affected by the war on drugs and 2. Land use and the negative environmental impacts on the residents who live in some of the most beautiful land in our State.

The opposition is about the land use issues which would allow marijuana grows; large commercial cultivation closes to residential areas. The extremely harmful environmental impacts have been documented in other regions which have legalized cannabis cultivation. It is also about the potential rise in crime, health and safety issues that have also been well documented, as well as the dangers that consumption lounges and events (impaired drivers) will bring to the rural and semi rural towns.

Planning Groups supported a reasonable alternative that would only allow indoor cultivation to help environmental and health concerns (pesticides for example); greater setbacks with more sensitive locations like parks, trails and churches. It would remove the consumption lounges and events which are the most damaging to public safety (impaired drivers). Incredibly, the three Supervisors completely ignored this alternative.

This is not representation. It was clear at the hearing that these three Supervisors had already made their decision and their only concern was for those affected by the war on drugs, not the residents who live in the areas that will be affected.

By the actions & words of the three Supervisors, it appears that those in the unincorporated areas will now “pay” for those affected by the past war on drugs. There are residents in the unincorporated communities who have also been affected by the Past War on Drugs and are now being further punished. Their land use, environment, health and safety will be sacrificed.

Supervisors, there is still time to revise your direction and establish your goal of a Socially Equitable Cannabis Program. We are not being unreasonable. We are simply asking for more environmental and public health and safety guardrails to protect the half a million residents, especially the most vulnerable children and seniors who live in the beautiful unincorporated San Diego County.

Respectfully,

Fallbrook Community Planning Group

Eileen Delaney, Chair

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Jeniene Domercq, 2nd Vice Chair

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