

## Turner, Nicole

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**From:** Sarah Bstar <sarahbstar@gmail.com>  
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RE: Public Comment for Board of Supervisors agenda item 24-361 hearing date April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024

Greetings Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, Humboldt County Planning Commission, and Director Ford

Once cannabis is recognized as an agricultural product, Humboldt County may have the ability to effectively implement a land use ordinance that benefits both the environment and the economy. Until that time, the burden of maintaining healthy communities falls into your hands. The attempts of citizens and industry members to navigate the regulatory framework without support from implementing agencies' technical expertise has left communities unsupported. Landscape level planning, ensuring equitable economic structures, and public accountability are the job of the government. We rely on the agencies to provide technical assistance and regulatory oversight on these "big picture" elements. It seems haphazard and divisive that individual business owners and their neighbors have been left to fend for themselves during this complex process of decriminalization. Without programmatic permitting and accountability through public disclosure any real benefits and/or harms remain in the dark.

As the lead on the EIR the County has served the public well by completing the required analysis. Yet the follow thru seems deficient, at least. Without a comprehensive watershed-wide management plan; complete with water budgets, habitat and species distributions, carrying capacity of infrastructure like roads and housing, or even a baseline of what impacts we are tracking, the "exempt for pre-existing conditions" seems like a weak stance. If we had formulated a community supported ordinance in the first place, we would not need to even suggest freezing any forward growth.

The dialogue in 2017 was of improving environmental health, access to medicine and balancing the progress of economic growth and resource conservation. While moving the commercial operations to the lands zoned for agriculture may have resonated with the general plan, it sacrificed the cultural values of the residents living rurally in the hills. Discussions of large versus small grows lost its validity once incentives for regenerative agriculture were abandoned.

The resolution supporting caps on the number and distribution of permitted growers seems worthless if not founded in science informed decision making. Water budgets at a sub watershed level, including groundwater recharge, rainfall and peak flows will better inform our agricultural policies. While attempting to meet state requirements which support municipal utilities and commercial infrastructure, we ignored the value of homegrown produce. This is a request for more public involvement in land use policies and more data driven

decision making. The number and size of cannabis permits are less significant than the impact those farms are having on the communities they operate in. A 10,000 ft<sup>2</sup> permit using resource intensive agriculture may have more of a negative impact than a regenerative farm of over an acre. After 7 years of reporting, inspections, and regulatory oversight it is high time for an answer to this and other questions about the sustainability of Humboldt County communities.

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