COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
Board of Supervisors

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February 3, 2026

The Honorable Catherine Blakespear
Member, California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 7720
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Thomas Umberg
Member, California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 6610
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 936 – SUPPORT

Dear Senators Blakespear and Umberg:

On behalf of the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to express support for Senate Bill 936 banning the sale of nitrous oxide for illicit purposes.

Senate Bill 936 complements a growing number of local ordinances and laws in other states that ban the sale of nitrous oxide, which is widely used as an illicit recreational inhalant with serious and sobering consequences in communities across the state. In particular, SB 936 bans all sales of flavored nitrous oxide and the sale of non-flavored nitrous oxide in containers larger than 8 grams, which is the size typically used to charge whipped cream cylinders. SB 936 preserves access to nitrous oxide for legitimate purposes by exempting sales for manufacturing, automotive, medical, and dentistry purposes.

When used as a recreational inhalant, nitrous oxide has been linked to serious health problems. According to the Network for Public Health Law, "the euphoria experienced by users of nitrous oxide is brief, but one-time, chronic, or excessive use contributes to negative health outcomes" like dizziness, nausea and vomiting, memory loss, low blood pressure, impaired functioning and judgement, irregular heartbeats, severe asphyxia, and neurological damage.

Humboldt County Supervisor Michelle Bushnell noted, "It has long been recognized by many that recreational nitrous oxide use is a significant issue that impacts the health and well-being of our community."

Unfortunately, existing law provides neither the tools nor the consequences to adequately address the problem, which is why SB 936 is so important. Mendocino County Supervisor Madeline Cline observed, "Existing state laws are not effectively deterring the illicit sale and recreational use of nitrous oxide, so it's time for California's Legislature to follow the lead of local jurisdictions and other states like Nebraska and Louisiana."

The federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warned the public about the risks of recreational nitrous oxide use in June of 2025. California has long prohibited the use or sale of nitrous oxide for

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recreational purposes, but those laws have had little impact on a rapidly increasing problem. According to the Orange County Health Care Agency, there has been a "rise in illnesses associated with [nitrous oxide] misuse, particularly among adolescents and young adults...[which] has led to documented neurological harm, impaired judgement, and traffic accidents." Nitrous oxide misuse was responsible for a fatal collision in Orange County that killed three and seriously injured four children. A heart-wrenching article in the San Franscisco Chronicle detailed the deadly consequences of behind-the-wheel use of nitrous oxide in Northern California, which aside from killing the driver and two occupants of another vehicle, left a young mother who was a passenger in the car with a severe traumatic brain injury and unable to walk or talk.

For these reasons the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors supports SB 936, which seeks to ban the sale of nitrous oxide and stop its use as a dangerous recreational inhalant. At the same time, SB 936 appropriately preserves the ability to sell and use nitrous oxide for legitimate purposes like making whipped cream, dentistry, manufacturing, and automotive purposes.

Sincerely,

Bernie Norvell, Chair
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

CC: The Honorable Alex Padilla, Senator from California
The Honorable Mike McGuire, Member of the California State Senate
The Honorable Chris Rogers, Member of the California State Assembly
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)