



Mendocino County Board of Supervisors
501 Low Gap Road
Ukiah, CA 95482

January 3, 2021

Re: **Item 5J on 1/5/2021** - Discussion and Possible Action Regarding the Operation, Staffing, and Fiscal Plan for Additional Ten (10) Deputies to the Sheriff's Operations to Address Organized Crime and Illegal Marijuana Grows in Mendocino County (*Sponsor: Sheriff-Coroner*)

Honorable Supervisors,

MCA supports the Sheriff's request and appreciates his commitment to enforcement against egregious environmental violations and violent crimes. Specifically, the Sheriff's dedication to addressing environmental violations and the rise in violent offenses almost exclusively associated with persons and properties that are not in the 10A.17 cultivation permitting program. MCA has confidence that the Sheriff will continue to balance the urgent need to stem the tide of these crimes while allowing nonviolent and non-egregious land use violations to be handled through the mechanisms of the permitting program and through Code Enforcement rather than law enforcement actions. We also appreciate the Sheriff's continued recognition that regulated cultivators are not the problem and that there needs to be a pathway for those that are willing to be regulated through local permitting and state licensing.

MCA continues to emphasize that it is counterproductive to criminally enforce unregulated cultivation by individuals who desire to be a part of the regulated market, are not committing egregious environmental or violent acts, and do not currently have the ability to join the regulated market due to the fact that the County has not been accepting applications since October 2019.

It is important to note that the County is set to launch its Equity Program to utilize the Equity Grant Funding received from the state to redress the inequities of the decades long war on drugs that has plagued our community. The receipt of these funds is a bold acknowledgement by the state that many members of our County have been disadvantaged by the war on drugs, and are deserving of increased opportunities and decreased barriers to entry into the regulated market. We request that, in light of this, the county re-open the permitting process for legacy cultivators and cultivation sites.

Additionally, MCA respectfully must register a very strong criticism of the use of a photo of a hog-tied Black man in the materials included for this Agenda item regarding the Sheriff Office's assessment of criminal activity in our county. While the stated intent of the image was to show the undesirable consequences of vigilante justice, the result has been to obscure the primary

issue. The image is both misleading and harmful. Misleading in that it supports the myth that Black people (0.6% of this county's population) are to be automatically associated with criminal activity. Harmful in that it contributes to a current racially polarized national context, especially with regard to relations between Black Americans and law enforcement. We request that the image be pulled from all MCSO documentation and County websites and materials.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments, questions, and recommendations. We appreciate your careful consideration of the points we have raised.

Sincerely,

Mendocino Cannabis Alliance