

I am a pediatrician in Ukiah and live on range land west of town. I strongly **OPPOSE** opening up our rural land and open spaces to large, commercial marijuana grows.

I moved to Mendocino County nearly five years ago. I have learned that the county has a foundation in ranching, farming and environmental preservation while beating to a tune of innovation and creativity. Incentivizing the marijuana industry even more by allowing it to encroach into our protected range land and open spaces threatens our natural environment as well as our sense of community.

Protecting our range land is important to saving and maintaining already stressed and threatened vital oak woodlands and grasslands. Incentives to keep range land as range land also keeps grasses down during worsening fire seasons. During the 30 minute drive from work to home I pass many ranches and am reassured when passing the large cattle ranches where grass is greenest first and lowest during the summer and fall months. Marijuana grows do not provide fire mitigation. They do bring increased traffic on the roads, increased water use and diversions, increased building/construction/pavement in open spaces, and even pesticides and other chemicals that alter our bee, animal and plant populations.

From a health standpoint, increased marijuana grows in our county is NOT good for children and families. Increasingly, immigrant parents are working at cannabis farms and the chemicals and marijuana plants smell so strong on their skin and clothes it is hard to breathe in the clinic room when I see their child. More and more children are reporting anxiety because their parent works on a cannabis farm or their parent runs a cannabis farm and they are so scared of leaving their room because of all the strangers coming in and out of the home.

We must keep marijuana grows out of range land and open spaces for the future of our community and children. We must maintain diversity in our industry and not invest more and more in cannabis crops.

Sincerely,
Casey Johnston, MD
Pediatrician