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Mendocino County Board of Supervisors  
501 Low Gap Road  
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Re: Agenda Item 5b for 7/20/21 Meeting

Dear Supervisors,

You all are aware that I have been a cannabis attorney for a long time. However, you may not realize that I conducted seminal criminal and civil rights cannabis litigation during the most heightened times of the War on Drugs. One case I handled involved a young family with a toddler and a developmentally disabled 8-year-old who were held in handcuffs at gunpoint for more than 8 hours, while threatened with 20 years in federal prison for growing less than 100 cannabis plants. During the 8 hours, some agents intentionally destroyed their home's water lines and defiled the bedroom by spray painting profane graffiti while other agents dumped every box of dried goods onto the kitchen floor. The mother and two children sat in my office that night, shaking, rocking, and moaning, too scared to talk. Other cases involved environmental degradation occurring at the hand of agents who came to the countryside of Mendocino County from urban areas with a Rambo-like zealotry and a profound lack of environmental sensitivity as they sought to eradicate plants. In fact, the nuns of the Redwood Monastery in Whale Gulch, came to me and asked to participate in the civil rights case I litigated against Operation Greensweep because of the terror they and their animals suffered along with the severe negative environmental impacts to their property because of law enforcement operations. The trauma and fear that citizens experienced during those days was devastating and had generational emotional and financial impacts.

It was this specific history that led me to closely follow the development of the California Cannabis Equity Act of 2018, enacted to assist those who were victims of the War on Drugs. From 2018 through 2020, I put extensive resources and time into ensuring the state Equity Grant for Mendocino County was possible. I spent countless hours providing oral and written history regarding the specific impacts to Mendocino County residents from the War on Drugs. The files from litigation that I conducted against CAMP, the DEA and other law enforcement agencies more than 25 years ago, formed a good deal of the foundational information necessary. I conducted Declaration Workshops and provided guidance to victims who were brave enough to relive the trauma and tell their story so the county would have more impactful supporting evidence.

When the Local Equity Program (LEP) was drafted, I warned that the income requirements and other specific components needed to change for the program work. At the time I was told, it could and would easily be amended. Despite my multiple requests, it never was.

After the County was awarded the funding but had failed to draft any program specifics, we at MCA took the initiative to prepare a timeline and suggested process for the program



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development. We were disregarded. Later, when the County finally had a preliminary draft of the proposed program details, Jude Tillman and I spent conducted exhaustive research and analysis and turned our findings into a detailed program proposal with specific eligibility matrix and programmatic elements that better matched the goals and practical realities needed.

I detail the time and effort that me and other MCA volunteers put into this because I want you to understand that these issues are important enough that **I was willing to donate my expertise and experience without any compensation or benefit**. And yet, the effort put in by experts like me is often ignored--- resulting in delays, ineffective implementation, and if we are lucky, might eventually be followed by some version of what was suggested by us to begin with.

I am glad that the income eligibility change is finally moving forward after a year and a half, but I hope that additional programmatic features will be reconsidered. I also implore the county to **stop attempting to design and implement programs without listening to those that are dealing with the issues on the ground**, including cannabis operators from all sectors of the industry, whether represented through MCA and other organizations, or through direct participation in on-going roundtable meetings where the county can hear input on design and implementation issues before it launches new or changed projects and procedures that may not be practical or effective.

Please become more efficient by incorporating feedback from experts and those that are directly impacted by the policies you set and programs that you direct staff to implement.

Thank you for your consideration.

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