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January 14, 2020

Ventura County Board of Supervisors
800 S. Victoria Avenue, #L1740
Ventura, CA 93009-1740

Re: Interim Urgency Ordinance (hemp) - Agenda Item #45

Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed January 14, 2020 draft interim urgency ordinance, regarding creation of a temporary ½-mile buffer from city-zoned residential areas, residential areas in the unincorporated area, and schools for the outdoor planting of industrial hemp.

The agricultural industry contributes over \$2 billion to the Ventura County economy each year. As outlined in Ventura County's SOAR ordinance, agriculture has been and remains a major contributor to the economy, directly and indirectly creating employment, and generating substantial tax revenues for the County. The Board of Supervisors is directed under SOAR to encourage the continuation and development of programs that support agricultural production of County grown agricultural products and improve the economic viability of agriculture through policies that support agriculture as an integral business to the County.

Given this mandate, CoLAB would like to provide the following information to the Board, for consideration today:

Establishment of a ½ mile buffer from city zoned residential areas, schools, and residential areas in unincorporated areas will reduce the farmland acreage available for cultivation of industrial hemp by over 33%. Of the approximately 3,600 acres that were planted in 2019, 32% (approximately 1,150 acres) would be removed from production under the proposed urgency ordinance.

We encourage the Board to seek a reasonable compromise between the supporting agriculture and addressing the complaints of odors from hemp crops.

Sonoma County has faced many of the same challenges as Ventura County. Like Ventura, Sonoma has urban-agricultural interface. Both Counties rely heavily on the agricultural industry to provide essential tax revenue and jobs. And in both Counties, there is huge public support for the preservation of agricultural lands.

On December 17, 2019, Supervisors Bennett and Parks encouraged Ventura County to look to Sonoma County for ideas to support and preserve the sustainability of the local agricultural industry. On Monday, January 6, 2020, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors voted to allow cultivation of industrial hemp “as any other crop”, with only a 600’ wide buffer from sensitive receptor sites. With that in mind, we urge the Board to continue to seek reasonable measures to mitigate any unintended impacts that may occur from cultivation of industrial hemp. If smaller buffer areas help address public complaints of odors, we encourage the Board to consider this.

The Board has stated that they will continue to support the sustainability of the agricultural industry in Ventura County. But for agriculture to remain sustainable, it must remain economically viable. Farmers must be allowed to cultivate crops that reduce water use, reduce pesticide use and have a potential to be profitable. Local farmers and ranchers take great pride in the high quality and safety of Ventura County agricultural products and their ability to compete in global markets. We urge the Board to work our local agricultural experts, including the Hemp Cultivators Working Group, to establish mitigation measures that will allow for the cultivation of industrial hemp while preserving local quality of life for our residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Louise Lampara
Executive Director