



Local Public Safety Coordinating Council

Josephine County, Oregon

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<http://www.co.josephine.or.us>

March 8, 2019

Re: HB 2382 – Law Enforcement Stability Act

Dear Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Bonham and Fahey, and members of the House Committee on Economic Development,

Josephine County's Local Public Safety Coordinating Council (LPSCC) strongly supports HB 2382, known as the Law Enforcement Stability Act. Our county is one of the most prolific marijuana-producing counties in the state, and this initiative would provide much-needed funding to allow our law enforcement to combat the thriving black market.

Our county has long been a source of illegally grown marijuana due to its temperate climate and many hidden corners. With the legalization of recreational marijuana in Oregon, legal grows in Josephine County have multiplied exponentially. Josephine and Jackson counties together account for more than a third of registered recreational grows in the state. Most of these growers are law-abiding citizens, but the statewide oversupply of marijuana has resulted in a strong incentive for diversion to the black market.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission and the Oregon Health Authority, tasked with regulating the recreational and medical marijuana markets, have been unable to provide sufficient oversight of legally registered grows in Oregon. A Secretary of State audit released in January 2019 found significant gaps in regulatory controls that increased the risk of black-market diversion.

As a former timber county, Josephine County's law enforcement was historically funded by federal timber subsidies. With the decline of the timber industry, law enforcement levels have plummeted. Our Sheriff's Office operates just 12 hours a day and no longer has an investigative unit. The passage of a long-sought public safety levy in May 2017 helped stabilize the Sheriff's Office. However, we are still sorely unequipped to monitor the plethora of marijuana grows in our county, and there remains a steady stream of black-market marijuana flowing out of our county.

An Oregon-Idaho High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) report issued last year stated that between July 2015 and January 2018, 14,550 pounds of black-market cannabis grown in Oregon was seized en route to 37 states. The majority of that cannabis, valued at more than \$48 million, was linked to Josephine and five other Oregon counties.

Despite our Sheriff's recent progress in rebuilding his department, Josephine County remains ripe for abuse by illegal growers, with countless hidden pockets in our 1,642 square miles and few patrols on our roadways to curb black-market-marijuana transport. There is confirmed presence of major drug-

trafficking organizations (DTOs) in Josephine County. For instance, in 2015 and 2016, the Rogue Area Drug Enforcement (RADE) interagency team investigated three illegal grows operated by DTOs based in Mexico, seizing a total of 25,657 marijuana plants.

Josephine County is moving in the right direction in building up our Sheriff's Office, but law enforcement levels in rural areas are not sufficient to combat the thriving black market. HB 2382 would allow our Sheriff's Office to expand its presence in these areas and begin curbing this significant illegal industry that is affecting Josephine County, other Oregon counties and numerous U.S. states.

Thank you for your consideration of this important initiative.

Sincerely,



Ryan Mulkins, *Josephine County LPSCC Chair*

Robert Bain, *Presiding Judge*
Lily Morgan, *Commissioner*
Gary Berlant, *Public Defender*
Dave Daniel, *Sheriff*
Mark Dillinger, *City of Cave Junction*
Ray Dinkins, *Women's Crisis Support Team*
Susie Ellwood, *Illinois Valley Safe House Alliance*
Lt. Jess Elzy, *Oregon State Police*
Nate Gaoiran, *Community Corrections Director*
Jim Goodwin, *Juvenile Justice (Vice Chair)*
Warren Hensman, *Grants Pass Department of Public Safety Director*
Ken Jerin, *Oregon Youth Authority*
Roy Lindsay, *Grants Pass Mayor*
Karla McCafferty, *Options for Southern Oregon*
Elysa Prince, *Member at Large*
Travis Robbins, *City of Cave Junction*
Michael Weber, *Public Health Director*