

Date February 8th, 2022

Testimony for SB 1564 – In favor of Hemp License Moratorium

Dear Chair and Committee Members;

The issues in Southern Oregon caused by the illegal cannabis industry are well known and have been documented over the past 5 years. These issues include increased criminal complaints, water misuse and theft, environmental impacts, code enforcement complaints, and livability issues for our communities in Jackson and Josephine Counties.

In 2021, the issues were magnified by a significant increase in illegal cannabis cultivation. This brought new problems such as humanitarian issues (labor trafficking), and an influx of cartel related activity. It also exacerbated ongoing issues, such as water misuse and livability. The reasons for these issues are layered and complex but the root of these problems are a lack of resources for regulation and enforcement, loop holes in the administrative rules and laws, and lack of penalties for offenders.

Currently there are not enough resources allocated for regulatory agencies or law enforcement and those who engage in the illegal cannabis industry know this and exploit this. While I recognize the efforts being made by our legislative body to correct this, it will take time and ongoing support to change the direction we have been headed for many years.

In Southern Oregon we need to slow this problem down to give law enforcement, the Oregon Department of Agriculture, and the O.L.C.C. time to build the infrastructure necessary to properly regulate the industry and to investigate those who operate outside of the laws. There also needs to be time for comprehensive legislative review and adjustments so it is not as easy or profitable for those who operate in the black market.

Those who are engaged in the **legal** cannabis industry are undermined by the black market and those who scoff at the rules and regulations. Our law enforcement resources are consumed by those who disregard the law, further exacerbating limited staffing. This additional work results in the inability to deal with other problems, further impacting the livability of our residents.

2021 showed the current Hemp industry in Jackson and Josephine County was wrought with fraud and illegal activity. While 53 to 54 percent of the registered cultivation sites were found to be growing marijuana, there were other non-compliance and nefarious actions, leading myself and others to believe the actual number of the industry not growing strictly hemp, in the manner required, is closer to 75 percent.

Our water resources are also limited in Jackson County. This past year water trucks were lined up, sometimes for hours, to fill their trucks and deliver water to those cultivating cannabis, many who are doing so illegally. We know there was a distinct correlation between complaints of illegal cannabis cultivation and water complaints, but the Water Master's office was also under resourced to effectively

respond and investigate these complaints. The lack of resources is compounded by the lack of penalties for theft and misuse of water.

Allowing more licenses than there are resources to ensure compliance will again open up avenues for the black market, thus negatively impacting the legal cannabis industry and the residents of Southern Oregon. Please consider a temporary moratorium on both Hemp and Marijuana licenses, sustained and adequate funding for law enforcement and the regulatory agencies, and also meaningful changes to the rules, regulations, and laws to reduce the vast **illegal** cannabis industry in Southern Oregon, which is also now prevalent in other parts of the state.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity for testifying on this issue.

Sheriff Nathan Sickler,

Jackson County Sheriff, member of the Jackson County Marijuana Advisory Committee, and Co-Chair for the Oregon State Sheriff's Association Marijuana Sub-Committee