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April 21, 2026

San Francisco Board of Supervisors
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
City Hall, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

Re: File #260281 – Cannabis Cafés

Dear members of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors,

Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights is writing to express our opposition to the proposed ordinance to allow cannabis cafés and to exempt these businesses from the prohibitions on smoking in business establishments.

San Francisco already allows cannabis retailers to have a smoking lounge and there are currently around ten such lounges in operation. This proposed ordinance would further expand where smoking and vaping cannabis is allowed indoors by allowing for these spaces to operate as cafés.

This cannabis café proposal is permitted by AB1775, which allows jurisdictions to permit cannabis retailers to sell food and non-alcoholic beverages and host events. By allowing cannabis retailers to operate as cafés, restaurants, and entertainment venues with indoor smoking and vaping, San Francisco will roll back smokefree workplace protections that California has provided to hospitality workers and patrons since 1998.

San Francisco's workforce should be able to breathe air that is free from all types of secondhand smoke exposure—including those working in the cannabis industry. If this proposed ordinance is adopted, employees working in new and expanded cannabis businesses will be exposed to increased indoor air pollution from secondhand smoke in order to do their job and will suffer the negative health effects of that exposure. This is a public health issue and will affect everyone in the community if unprotected workers must sacrifice their health for a paycheck.

Likewise, patrons and the public will be exposed to smoke inside these venues and in adjacent establishments. Does San Francisco really want to roll back 30 years of smokefree worksite protections at hospitality businesses and instead go back to asking people "smoking or nonsmoking section?" as they enter a café?

Where does San Francisco draw the line for protecting worker health over expanding where cannabis smoking is allowed indoors? Although the state allows for cannabis cafés, the city can – and should - choose to say no.

Cannabis business proponents are ignoring the health risks of rolling back decades of smokefree worksite protections and instead focusing on dubious economic claims of

“giving struggling legal cannabis businesses a much-needed lifeline by allowing them to compete, and giving San Francisco’s nightlife economy a boost of vitality.” San Francisco nightlife is thriving and there is no vitality associated with stripping away workplace health and safety protections from our essential hospitality workers, who are as deserving of breathing safe, clean air on the job as any other San Franciscan.

Cannabis lounges expose workers and patrons to significant levels of secondhand smoke, as illustrated by a 2025 study by researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles, which found that the levels of PM2.5 fine particulate air pollution inside a Los Angeles cannabis consumption lounge were **10 times higher** during the lounge’s busiest hours than the particulate levels inside the lounge when the business was closed and were 3 times higher than the particulate levels during slower times of day.^x

The 2024 Surgeon General's Report titled “Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities” found that “Secondhand cannabis smoke contains many of **the same toxic and cancer-causing chemicals found in tobacco smoke**, and some of those chemicals are found in higher amounts in secondhand cannabis smoke than in secondhand tobacco smoke.” The report also stated, “**protecting all populations from exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, including exposure to cannabis smoke, in all indoor settings should remain a priority.**”^v

The proposed ordinance also removes the prohibition on establishments with cannabis consumption permits requiring employees to enter a designated smoking room as a condition of their employment. It is necessary to reiterate that **a designated smoking room does not help address worker health concerns because ventilation systems are not a solution for protecting health from secondhand smoke exposure.**

No amount of ventilation or filtering can eliminate the health risks of breathing secondhand smoke either from tobacco or cannabis. Even sophisticated ventilation systems in hospitality settings do not protect people from the health impacts of secondhand smoke. False claims of being able to “clean” the air by filtration or using other chemicals are not a substitute for clean air. **The only known way to reduce the risks associated with secondhand smoke is with a 100% smokefree environment.** This is affirmed by all leading health agencies, as well as ASHRAE, the standard-setting body for the HVAC industry.^{xii}

If San Francisco is determined to allow cannabis cafés, then we strongly recommend adding a requirement that cannabis smoking lounges and cannabis cafés be located in freestanding buildings, and not in mixed-use buildings, so that workers, residents, and patrons in attached businesses and residences are not exposed to drifting secondhand cannabis smoke or aerosol. **While cannabis is now legal, it should not be used in ways that harm other people.**

We urge you to consider the consequences of promoting cannabis industry business interests over the imperative to maintain public health protections.

Thank you for your leadership and desire to make San Francisco the best place to live, work, and visit. Please feel free to contact me at 510-841-3045 or Liz Williams at liz.williams@no-smoke.org or 510-333-4559 if you have questions, comments, or feedback.

For Scientific Rationale and citations, see next page.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Hallett, MPH
President and CEO

Americans for Nonsmokers’ Rights is a national, member-based, not-for-profit organization based in Berkeley, CA that is dedicated to helping nonsmokers breathe smokefree air since 1976.

PO Box 2941, Berkeley, California 94702 • 510.841.3032 • nonsmokersrights.org
ANR is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit lobbying organization and contributions are not tax deductible. Tax ID: #94-598713

Scientific Rationale

All types of secondhand smoke are harmful to health. Secondhand smoke from combusted cannabis contains fine particulate matter which is a form of indoor air pollution, which can be breathed deeply into the lungs and can cause lung irritation, asthma attacks, and makes respiratory infections more likely.^{i,ii} Exposure to fine particulate matter—from tobacco smoke, cannabis smoke, wood smoke, or any other combusted source—can exacerbate health problems especially for people with respiratory conditions like asthma, bronchitis, or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).^{iii,iv}

The 2024 Surgeon General's Report, [Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities](#), emphasized that “The increased legalization of recreational cannabis at state and local levels represents a threat to smokefree norms and protections and has implications for health disparities, due to creating exemptions for cannabis smoking” and advised that “smokefree policies will be most protective if they cover all emissions (i.e., smoke, aerosol) from the full range of products, including e-cigarettes, cigars, waterpipe, and cannabis.”^v

This Surgeon General’s Report confirmed that the current body of science shows that both tobacco and cannabis smoke have similar chemical composition and suggests that they may have harmful cardiovascular health effects, such as atherosclerosis (partially blocked arteries), heart attack, and stroke.^{vi} In peer-reviewed research studies, tobacco and cannabis smoke have both been shown to impair blood vessel function^{vii} and secondhand cannabis smoke contains many of the same carcinogens and toxic chemicals as secondhand tobacco smoke.^{viii}

Particulate levels from secondhand marijuana smoke are even higher than particulate levels from secondhand tobacco smoke. A study published in 2021 by Stanford researchers found that **smoking a cannabis joint indoors can produce extremely high indoor particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) concentrations, thereby exposing workers and the public to dangerous secondhand cannabis smoke.** The average PM_{2.5} emission rate of pre-rolled cannabis joints was found to be **3.5 times the average emission** rate of Marlboro tobacco cigarettes, the most popular US cigarette brand.^{ix}

The levels of PM_{2.5} fine particulate matter inside a Los Angeles cannabis consumption lounge were 10 times higher during the lounge’s busiest hours than the particulate levels inside the lounge when the business was closed and were 3 times higher than the levels during slower times of day.^x

Likewise, published research measuring the indoor air quality at a San Francisco cannabis lounge indicates that **particle concentrations from dabbing and vaporizing cannabis can create levels of indoor air pollution that are hazardous to human health**, even when cannabis smoking is not permitted indoors. Particulate exposure at these concentrations can cause cardiovascular and respiratory disease.^{xi}

A 2022 study from UCSF researchers measured the PM_{2.5} concentrations in a San Francisco cannabis retailer’s smoking lounge and found that the installation of a ventilation system only resulted in a 12% decrease in the level of fine particulate matter in the air.^{xii}

Ventilation, air purification systems, and smoking rooms are not a solution to secondhand tobacco *or* cannabis smoke exposure. The American Society for Heating, Refrigeration, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), the standard setting body for the HVAC industry, affirms that mechanical solutions like ventilation and other air cleaning technologies cannot control for the health hazards of secondhand smoke. Notably, ASHRAE bases its ventilation standard (62.1) for acceptable indoor air quality on **an environment that is completely free from secondhand tobacco smoke, secondhand cannabis smoke, and emissions from electronic smoking devices.**^{xiii}

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- ⁱ Hillier, F.C.; et al. "Concentration and particle size distribution in smoke from marijuana cigarettes with different Δ9-tetrahydrocannabinol content." *Fundamental and Applied Toxicology*. Volume 4, Issue 3, Part 1, June 1984, Pages 451-454. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/0272059084902021>
- ⁱⁱ "Air and Health: Particulate Matter." National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. <http://ephtracking.cdc.gov/showAirHealth.action#ParticulateMatter>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Grana, R; Benowitz, N; Glantz, S. "[Background Paper on E-cigarettes](#)," Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education, University of California, San Francisco and WHO Collaborating Center on Tobacco Control. December 2013.
- ^{iv} Brook, R.D.; et al. Particulate matter air pollution and cardiovascular disease: An update to the scientific statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2010; 121: 2331-78. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20458016>
- ^v U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, November 2024. <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/tobacco/index.html>
- ^{vi} Springer, M.L.; Glantz, S.A. "Marijuana Use and Heart Disease: Potential Effects of Public Exposure to Smoke," University of California at San Francisco. April 13, 2015. <https://tobacco.ucsf.edu/sites/tobacco.ucsf.edu/files/u9/MSHS%20fact%20sheet%20for%20CA%204-13-15.pdf>
- ^{vii} Wang, X., et al., "Brief exposure to marijuana secondhand smoke impairs vascular endothelial function" (conference abstract). *Circulation* 2014; 130: A19538. http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/130/Suppl_2/A19538.abstract
- ^{viii} Moir, D., et al., A comparison of mainstream and sidestream marijuana and tobacco cigarette smoke produced under two machine smoking conditions. *Chem Res Toxicol* 21: 494-502. (2008). <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18062674>
- ^{ix} Ott, W., et al., Measuring indoor fine particle concentrations, emission rates, and decay rates from cannabis use in a residence, *Atmospheric Environment: X*, Volume 10, 2021, 100106, ISSN 2590-1621, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aeaoa.2021.100106>. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S259016212100006X>
- ^x Niu, M., et al., "Fine and ultrafine particle concentrations in a cannabis consumption lounge," *Environmental Science and Technology Letters*, January 14, 2025. <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.estlett.4c01019>
- ^{xi} Murphy, M.B.; Huang, A.S.; Schick, S.F., "[PM2.5 concentrations in a cannabis store with on-site consumption](#)," *Environmental Health Perspectives* 129(6), June 16, 2021. <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/pdf/10.1289/EHP8689>
- ^{xii} Huang, A.S.; Murphy, M.B.C.; Jacob, P.; Schick, S.F., "PM2.5 concentrations in the smoking lounge of a cannabis store," *Environmental Science & Technology Letters* 9(6): 551–556, May 26, 2022. <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.estlett.2c00148>
- ^{xiii} ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 62.1-2022 - Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality. American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers, Inc. https://ashrae.iwrapper.com/ASHRAE_PREVIEW_ONLY_STANDARDS/STD_62.1_2022Quality