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## RE: CA State Fair: Cannabis Competition

Dear Mr. Durfee (Chair):

On behalf of the California Conference of Local Health Departments (CCLHO), we wish to express our serious concern about the planned cannabis competitions at 2022 California State Fair. We can only assume that the California State Fair board's endorsement of some of these competitions was granted without having fully considered the potentially harmful precedents they will likely set. A serious concern for us is the idea of awarding products simply for containing the highest concentrations of various chemicals.

While the stated intention of including cannabis competitions in the state fair is to normalize and destigmatize cannabis use and the cannabis industry, these competitions do not appear to be in alignment with that aim. Instead, they are likely to lead people to believe that the "best" cannabis products are simply the ones with the highest concentrations of THC, CBD, terpenes, etc. This framing is likely to result in inappropriate and unhealthy views of cannabis and to exacerbate the public-health concerns around its use.

We acknowledge that other psychoactive substances, most notably wine and beer (containing alcohol) and tobacco (containing nicotine), which are often included in fair competitions, represent significant health risks and are likely in general to be unhealthier than cannabis. However, we found no evidence that those other products, wine, beer, and tobacco, are awarded prizes at fairs for their unhealthy properties. To our knowledge awards for highest alcohol or nicotine content of these products do not exist at these fairs.

We strongly urge you to reconsider the cannabis competitions at the fair. The risks associated with cannabis use appear to be dose-dependent, meaning that the more consumed, the greater the risk. This supports our strong recommendation that these competitions be reframed to deemphasize concentrations of any chemicals.

CCLHO was established in statute in 1947 to advise the California Department of Health Services (now California Department of Public Health), other departments, boards, commissions, and officials of federal, state and local agencies, the Legislature and other organizations on all matters affecting health. CCLHO membership consists of all legally appointed physician health officers in California's 61 city and county jurisdictions.

Sincerely,

Julie Vaishampayan, MD, MPH  
President, California Conference of Local Health Officers