

Lake County Board of Supervisors
255 N Forbes Street
Lakeport, CA 95453

Re: July 8, 2025, Agenda Item 6.9

Consideration of Summary of Cannabis Policy Recommendations and Request for Board Direction.

Chair Crandell and Supervisors,

As the founder and owner of Ceago Del Lago and a former President of Fetzer Vineyards, I have witnessed firsthand the evolution of the wine industry, and more broadly, agribusiness in Northern California. As an organic and regenerative farmer, I understand the challenges of producing high-quality crops while meeting rigorous regulatory and environmental standards.

The grape industry, like many others, continues to face economic headwinds. Now more than ever, we need to expand opportunities for farmers to succeed, not restrict them. Agriculture in Lake County has always been a dynamic sector. Over time, we have witnessed the rise and fall of various crops as commodity prices fluctuate and market demands shift. Cannabis is part of that ongoing evolution.

If the proposed expansion of the Farmland Protection Zone and additional setback requirements are approved, they will only serve to reduce the viability of farming in this region. When farmers are unable to diversify or secure permits for other crops, including cannabis, the result is more fallowed land and fewer active farms. I strongly urge the Board to avoid increasing setbacks on cannabis farmers, many of whom have spent years working through the permitting process in good faith under the existing rules.

Farming in California is becoming more expensive and more complex with each passing year. We should be working together to support our agricultural community by maintaining flexibility and allowing a wider range of legal crops. Restricting farmers' options only increases the risk of economic instability across the entire sector.

It is also essential to recognize the financial role this industry plays in Lake County. In the last year alone, cannabis businesses contributed 3.4 million dollars in tax revenue, second only to sales tax. The county relies on this funding for essential services. Eliminating this revenue stream would create a significant gap that could affect every resident.

Please consider the broader impact of these proposals. Now is the time to stand with farmers, not limit their future.

Sincerely,

James Fetzer

Founder, Ceago Del Lago and Former President, Fetzer Vineyards