



INLAND EMPIRE
Legislative Caucus

July 29, 2024

Nicole Elliott
Director, California Department of Cannabis
Control
P.O. Box 419106
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741

Julie Henderson
Director, California Department of Pesticide
Regulation
PO Box 4015
Sacramento, CA 95812

RE: Illicit and Hazardous Pesticides in Cannabis Products

Dear Directors Elliott and Henderson,

I write to express my concerns and urge action on the potential presence of illicit and dangerous pesticides in marijuana sold through legal, licensed dispensaries. This issue not only affects public health but also undermines the integrity of our state's regulated cannabis market.

Since the legalization of recreational cannabis in California, we have witnessed significant economic growth in the industry. A recent Los Angeles Times investigation¹ revealed that more than 90% of cannabis samples from licensed dispensaries contained harmful pesticide residues, including chemicals banned for use on cannabis crops. This alarming statistic highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive approach to ensure the safety and purity of cannabis products available to consumers.

Cannabis consumers rely on the assurance that products purchased from licensed dispensaries are safe and free from harmful contaminants. The presence of illicit pesticides poses a significant threat to public health, particularly for vulnerable populations such as medical cannabis patients, who may already have compromised immune systems. Exposure to these toxic substances can lead to a range of adverse health effects, including respiratory issues, neurological damage, and an increased risk of cancer.

As regulators and policymakers, we protect consumers from these risks by requiring rigorous testing and quality control measures. One of the primary challenges in addressing this issue is the sophistication of illegal cannabis grow operations. Illegal growers may operate under the guise of already licensed cannabis operations, allowing marijuana tainted with harmful pesticides to be shipped to licensed distributors. Furthermore, many illegal retailers appear indistinguishable from

¹ St. John, Paige, and Alex Halperin. "The Dirty Secret of California's Legal Weed." *Los Angeles Times*, 14 June 2024, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-06-14/the-dirty-secret-of-californias-legal-weed>. Accessed 15 July 2024.

licensed shops and sell similar-looking counterfeit items, which often contain illegal pesticides. Even legal cannabis products may be tampered with and diverted into the illegal market. This is particularly harmful to the Inland Empire, as it contains a significant number of illegal grows that affect our environment and communities². As a result, even cannabis products that appear to be compliant with state regulations can be tainted with dangerous chemicals.

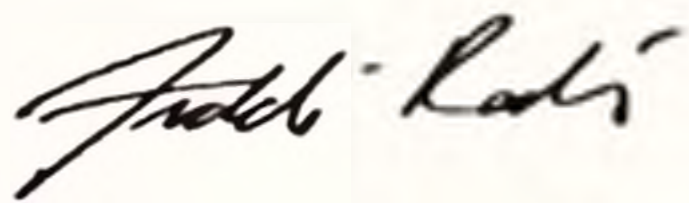
To combat this, I urge the following measures:

1. **Routine and Randomized Testing:** The California Department of Cannabis Control and Department of Pesticide Regulation should provide an annual report on their protocols and results regarding routine and randomized testing of cannabis. This will help identify contaminated products and ensure only safe and compliant cannabis reaches consumers.
2. **Stricter Penalties for Non-Compliance:** Licensed dispensaries and growers found to be in violation of pesticide regulations should face stricter penalties, including substantial fines and potential license revocation. This will serve as a deterrent to non-compliance and encourage adherence to safety standards.
3. **Collaboration with Local Law Enforcement:** Enhancing collaboration with local law enforcement agencies to dismantle illegal grow operations is crucial. This includes sharing intelligence and coordinating efforts to target the supply chain of illicit pesticides.

Ensuring the safety and quality of cannabis products is not only a public health imperative but also essential for the continued growth and legitimacy of the legal market. By addressing the issue of pesticide contamination, we can protect consumers, support compliant businesses, and weaken the influence of the illicit market. Implementing these measures will reinforce our commitment to setting the highest standards for cannabis safety and quality. These safety measures will also position California as a model for other states and countries to follow as they navigate their own paths to cannabis legalization.

For all of these reasons, I urge the California Department of Cannabis Control and the Department of Pesticide Regulation to take immediate action to address the issue of pesticide contamination in cannabis products. By implementing routine testing, enforcing stricter penalties, and collaborating with local law enforcement, we can ensure that the cannabis industry in California remains safe, transparent, and accountable. If you have any questions, please contact my Legislative Assistant, Byron Briones, at (916) 319-2053 or Byron.Briones@asm.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



FREDDIE RODRIGUEZ
Assemblymember, 53rd District
Chair, Inland Empire Caucus

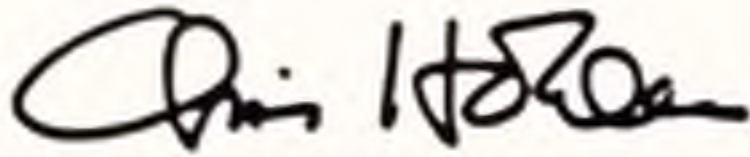
² <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/danger-in-the-desert-murder-of-6-puts-focus-back-on-illegal-marijuana-grows-in-the-inland-empire/3325792/>



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