

Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board

15721 Bernardo Heights Parkway - Suite B, #230, San Diego, CA 92128

www.rbplanningboard.com

June 3, 2024

Honorable Marni von Wilpert
San Diego City Council, District 5
202 C Street, 10th Floor
San Diego, CA 92101

Subject: Support for Mayor Gloria's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Proposal

Dear Councilmember von Wilpert:

The Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board (Planning Board) is providing this letter to express our support for Mayor Todd Gloria's balanced budget proposal for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, which includes cutting the Cannabis Social Equity and Economic Development (SEED) program, a program with one time grant funding leaving the ongoing costs of the program to be covered by the City's general fund. The Mayor has chosen instead to focus on funding core neighborhood services that will provide long term benefits to the citizens of San Diego.

The Planning Board unanimously approved a motion at our meeting of May 16, 2024 to support the Mayor's decision to cut the SEED program from the FY 2025 budget. This decision was made after considering past public concerns regarding the potential impact on our community of implementing the program. We ask that you support the Mayor's decision to focus on the City's greatest needs, which requires eliminating programs with one-time outside funding including the SEED program.

Although the SEED program is intended to address injustices caused by the War on Drugs, we believe that the program includes costs and risks that will exceed the proposed advantages. The Planning Board supports Mayor Gloria's plan to remove the SEED program from the city budget for the reasons listed below.

1. Achieving a Balanced Budget: The Mayor's proposal, which required difficult choices, focuses on sustaining funding for key priorities that will benefit residents citywide (e.g., fixing roads, improving storm water management, developing/upgrading parks and playgrounds where they are most needed, and addressing homelessness and public safety).
2. City Financial and Operational Burden: Although the SEED program would have been initially funded with grant money, the long-term management of the program would require a commitment of already limited City funding. In addition, with the existing 38

marijuana storefronts and numerous delivery services already in place, the addition of 36 new outlets proposed in the SEED program would likely place a strain on regulatory, enforcement, and public health systems in the city.

3. Public Health Concerns: Extensive, peer-reviewed studies have demonstrated the link between marijuana use and a number of mental health conditions, such as schizophrenia outbreaks, psychosis, and cognitive decline. In addition, studies indicate that marijuana use in adolescence can have long-lasting, irreversible impacts on brain development and function. Such adverse effects not only have an impact on public health, but are also likely to affect future budgets as funding will be needed to address these associated public health issues.
4. Ineffectiveness in Addressing Inequities: More effective ways to empower and uplift marginalized communities without encouraging and promoting substance use include community development projects, job training, internships, educational initiatives, and mentoring, as these actions have been shown to provide sustainable benefits to underserved communities.

The Planning Board respectfully requests that you support Mayor Gloria's proposal to eliminate the SEED program from the FY 2025 budget so limited funding can be used to address the City's most critical needs. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Robin Kaufman

Robin Kaufman
Chair, Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board

cc: Office of Mayor Todd Gloria, Councilmembers: Joe LaCava, Jennifer Campbell, Stephen Whitburn, Henry Foster III, Kent Lee, Raul Campillo, Vivian Moreno, Council President Sean Elo-Rivera