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**For Immediate Release**

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**CHILD and YOUTH ADVOCATES STATEWIDE HELD A VIRTUAL PRESS CONFERENCE TO OPPOSE TAX CUTS PROPOSED BY THE CANNABIS INDUSTRY**

Prominent child and youth advocate groups across California have joined forces to oppose the recent proposal from the cannabis industry to lower or eliminate state cannabis taxes. Revenues from state cannabis taxes currently support child care and youth prevention services for thousands of children living in poverty and youth of color across the state. Advocates provided a letter to the Governor and legislative leaders that details the negative impact on these crucial services if the state were to reduce or eliminate state cannabis taxes. 152 organizations have signed on to the letter, including First 5 California, the American Academy of Pediatrics and numerous local community-based organizations across the state.

During 2021-2022 state budget year, the state will allocate well over $400 million from cannabis revenue to child and youth services.

The virtual press conference included speakers from Youth Forward, the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, Parent Voices, Community Coalition, True North Organizing Network and the East Bay Asian Youth Center, as well as Dr Lynn Silver, the director of Getting It Right from the Start at the Public Health Institute.

“Revenues from Proposition 64 represent the only guaranteed state funding stream for affordable child care and currently support 21,486 children across the state. Any cuts to cannabis tax rates will result in cuts to child care for mostly children of color living in poverty who need that access now more than ever,” said Mary Ignatius, the statewide organizer for Parent Voices.

Eric Morrison Smith, Policy Associate from the Alliance of Boys and Men of Color stated, “If implemented, the proposal from the cannabis industry would directly harm communities of color and would deepen racial and economic inequities.”

“Not only does cannabis tax revenue play a crucial role in funding child care, but it is also a primary funding source for services for the formerly incarcerated, youth prevention services, job training, and other critical support systems in communities of color that have been impacted by the War on Drugs,” said Jim Keddy, executive director of Youth Forward.

“The legal cannabis industry is thriving, growing 55% last year alone, but like all industries, it wants its taxes reduced,” says Dr. Lynn Silver of Getting it Right from the Start, a program of the Public Health Institute. “Cutting taxes to increase profits will break Proposition 64’s promise to the voters, fundamental to its passage, that new revenue would serve the public good.”

Cannabis tax revenue from Prop 64 grants have been allocated to:

* 137 organizations to provide youth prevention services in Black and Brown neighborhoods in 41 counties.
* Community organizations and health departments to provide services to the formerly incarcerated and to families in communities impacted by the War on Drugs. This grant program has provided services to more than 57,000 individuals.
* Support youth access to the outdoors and to cultural resources for disadvantaged children and youth in the total amount of $14.5 million.
* Finally, $31 million in Prop 64 grants to 33 local governments to support youth prevention, public health and public safety.

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