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Plan to Prevent Underage Marijuana Use Advances

Statement by City Attorney Mara W. Elliott on proposed Social Host Ordinance amendment

City Attorney Mara W. Elliott and San Diego Police Chief David Nisleit proposed today an amendment to the City's Social Host Ordinance that would make it illegal to provide an environment where the underage use of marijuana, controlled substances, and alcohol use can take place. The City's existing ordinance only addresses underage drinking.

The amendment was proposed to the City Council Committee on Public Safety and Livable Neighborhoods. The Committee voted unanimously to bring the proposed amendment to the full City Council for a vote.

“As a mom, keeping my children safe is my priority, and as City Attorney, I am committed to protecting all children in San Diego,” City Attorney Mara W. Elliott said. **“The addition of marijuana and controlled substances to the Social Host Ordinance gives law enforcement an additional tool that will deter conduct that puts children at risk. My office and the San Diego Police Department will work together to educate the public about this ordinance and its intent, and we will hold those who choose to ignore it accountable through arrest and prosecution.”**

California's Proposition 64, which legalized marijuana use by adults, has opened a door for increased marijuana use by minors. Sometimes underage use is assisted by well-meaning adults who mistakenly believe its dangers decrease when the use occurs in environments they host, even if they are not committing the crime of directly furnish marijuana to minors.

Summary of marijuana's detrimental impact on minors:

- Marijuana use affects brain development. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reported in June 2018: “When people begin using marijuana as teenagers, the drug may impair thinking, memory, and learning functions and affect how the brain builds connections between the areas necessary for these functions.”
- Nationwide, marijuana use by middle school and high school students is increasing. Marijuana/hashish use by 8th graders increased from 2017 to 2018, as did marijuana/hashish use by 10th graders.
- In San Diego County, marijuana remains the drug of choice for youths at Juvenile Hall, with 45 percent testing positive at the time of their Substance Abuse Monitoring interview, and 56 percent reporting it was the first substance they tried (compared with 25 percent for alcohol).
- Among the Juvenile Hall population, marijuana is the first substance used, with an average starting age of 12.4 years, before alcohol (12.7 years) or tobacco (12.9 years).

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