

## Communication from Public

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**Comments for Public Posting:** My name is Rebekah Garcia. I serve as the Vice President of the Los Angeles City Youth Council (OMYC 4), and I represent Council District 6. But most importantly, I'm speaking as a young person who is living alongside this issue every day. The first person I saw use nitrous oxide wasn't who small-minded people might expect. It was an incredibly wealthy teenager. That moment made it abundantly clear to me that this is an issue that transcends neighborhoods, income levels, and preconceived notions of what addiction looks like. This is something that cuts across communities all over our nation. Since then, I've seen it again and again. I've watched my generation turn towards it seeking an escape from the chaotic world we are living in. And when I see that the poison being pandered to them has the audacity to be flavored? It's dystopian. Studies have proven the harmful effects of flavored substances being targeted towards youth, we've had the legal battles, we've seen the outcomes from juul pods already. What makes flavored nitrous oxide especially concerning is how accessible and appealing it is. It doesn't look "dangerous". It doesn't feel like something that should carry consequences. And that's exactly how it has become so pervasive. It moves quietly, casually, and quickly. Through my work with the Gr818ers at Sheldon Skate Park in CD6, I've seen what's possible when young people are supported. Through cultural programming, mentorship, and consistent presence, we have seen a reduction in harmful behaviors, including substance use. Community-based organizations have been doing the work. We have already begun building safer, more supportive spaces for our youth. We are creating alternatives. We are building trust. We are showing up every day. Community partners have more than proven their commitment to care. Right now, much of the response is being carried by the communities most impacted, while flavored nitrous oxide remains widely accessible and appealing. There is an opportunity here to better align what is happening on the ground with the systems that shape it. Because at this moment, our work can feel like we are filling a bucket with holes at the bottom. Organizations are working hard, but the conditions that make this substance so appealing to access continue to operate. There is only so much we can do in post-harm intervention, we need a multi-prong approach where community leaders seriously look at

what can be done to facilitate positive change. This is where the City can step in as a partner in care and prevention. Banning flavored nitrous oxide may seem small to some, but we are telling you that it is a meaningful step toward reducing harm and limiting access to something that is clearly impacting young people across all communities. It allows the work already happening in our communities to actually be reinforced, rather than undermined. Speaking from my heart, I don't want anybody to slip through the cracks or through the holes at the bottom of the bucket. I don't want harm to continue to be perpetuated. And I refuse to believe that huge wins are the only ones that matter. While we may not be able to completely prevent addiction, I would argue that if we see an opportunity to prevent it, even just by a small margin, we should absolutely take it. Every inch towards progress is worth a mile in this line of work. What we are asking is for the City to stand with us, to help close the gaps that we cannot close alone, and to take action that strengthens the work already in motion. With your support, systemic support, we can give the people on the ground a higher chance of creating lasting impact. So please, ban flavored nitrous oxide. Let's choose to build a city where our systems support the futures we want for our youth, for our communities, and for this city.