

Communication from Public

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Council File No: 24-1220

Comments for Public Posting: Dear Council President and Councilmembers: On behalf of the Youth 4 Hoods Coalition in the San Fernando Valley, we write to express our strong support for Council File 24-1220. We urge the City of Los Angeles to move forward without delay on an ordinance prohibiting tobacco and cannabis retailers from selling, offering for sale, distributing, or exposing for sale nitrous oxide products, while preserving explicit exemptions for legitimate medical, food service, automotive, industrial, and pre-packaged food uses. This is the balanced framework requested by Councilmember Imelda Padilla and advanced by the Public Safety Committee. Nitrous oxide is not a minor nuisance or a harmless party product; it is an escalating public health and safety crisis. For decades, youth in Los Angeles have misused nitrous oxide, and locally, we see the consequences in several critical ways: Public Safety: There is a visible increase in young adults driving under the influence of nitrous oxide (commonly referred to as “NOZ”). Perpetrators are frequently identified by the presence of balloons used for inhalation while operating vehicles, creating a significant hazard on our roads. Environmental Impact: This is a major environmental concern. Hundreds, if not thousands, of discarded tanks litter our streets and parks, creating a persistent source of urban blight. Physical Health: Medical evidence confirms that misuse causes permanent neurological damage and brain injury. Normalization: The sale of nitrous oxide in smoke shops and similar retail outlets perpetuates the normalization of substance abuse. There is no legitimate reason for the recreational inhalation of this gas; it offers no social or health benefits, only harm, addiction, and litter. In 2025, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warned consumers against inhaling nitrous oxide products of any flavor or size, noting their prevalence in smoke shops, gas stations, and online marketplaces. The CDC has likewise warned that repeated misuse can cause severe neurological, cardiovascular, and psychiatric effects. Recent actions by the City of Los Angeles make it clear that this is not a theoretical concern. On March 25, 2026, the Los Angeles Public Safety Committee unanimously approved an ordinance directing the City Attorney to prepare a ban on sales by tobacco and cannabis retailers. Furthermore, on April 24, 2026, the City moved to support SB 758, stating that recreational nitrous oxide

misuse has emerged as a “significant public health and safety concern, particularly among young adults and youth.” Los Angeles students are already being affected. In a filing for Council File 24-1220, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) expressed concern regarding the increase in students possessing nitrous oxide on school grounds. The Los Angeles Times reported that LAUSD recorded 11 such incidents during the 2023–24 school year alone. The City should not mistake incomplete data for limited harm. As reported by the Los Angeles Times, the LAPD’s gang and narcotics division lacked a formal tracking system for nitrous oxide as of late 2024. This lack of comprehensive citywide data should be understood as a surveillance gap rather than a lack of impact. With rising youth incidents and the continued accessibility of flavored products, the City has more than enough evidence to act. Councilmember Padilla’s February 26, 2026, letter further highlights this as a quality-of-life issue, citing oxygen deprivation risks and the rampant discarding of canisters that undermines community beautification efforts. For organizations working directly with young people, this issue is urgent. Prevention efforts are undermined when dangerous products are sold in retail environments that youth perceive as “normal” or “low-risk.” Easy availability increases exposure and weakens the work that schools, parents, and community organizations do every day to keep our youth safe. This proposed ordinance is practical and appropriately tailored. It does not interfere with legitimate culinary, medical, or industrial sectors; rather, it targets the specific retail environments fueling recreational misuse. This is sound public policy and a necessary step toward protecting the families and neighborhoods of Los Angeles. For these reasons, Youth 4 Hoods respectfully urges the Los Angeles City Council to support and adopt Council File 24-1220 without delay. Sincerely, Jason Strickler Chair, Youth 4 Hoods Sylmar, CA 91342