

Santa Cruz, CA (Newsworthy.ai) Tuesday Mar 5, 2024 @ 8:00 AM Pacific —

After 41 years of serving the community, Emily's Bakery, a Santa Cruz landmark, closed its doors. A new cannabis dispensary, The Hook Outlet, in partnership with WAMM Phytotherapies will soon occupy the space. The project, led by local entrepreneurs Bryce Berryessa and Kyle Giorchino, prioritizes compassionate care and community engagement. However, it faces local resistance due to its proximity to a school.

Berryessa and Giorchino, known for their community-centric approach through their other dispensaries (The Hook Outlet in Capitola, Watsonville, and Treehouse in Soquel), partnered with WAMM Phytotherapies, a non-profit dedicated to providing affordable cannabis to low-income patients with life-threatening illnesses.

"Our goal is to carry on WAMM's mission of service," says Berryessa. "This dispensary represents a chance to provide essential medicine to those who need it most."

Emily Reilly, former bakery owner and ex-mayor, endorses the project, stating, "I was impressed with Bryce & Kyle's commitment to responsible operations and community involvement. It was great to work with folks who had done their due diligence...and were ready to commit their time, money, and energy to their project and our community."

Community Concerns and Responsible Approach

Despite meeting all legal requirements, including exceeding the required distance from schools, the dispensary faces opposition. The Santa Cruz City School Board expressed concerns over potential negative impacts on youth. These concerns have sparked debate about the appropriate distance between schools and cannabis dispensaries.

Berryessa emphasizes its commitment to education on safety and youth prevention, responsible practices, and exceeding legal standards. "We understand the concerns," says Berryessa. "That's why we've created resources for parents, partnered with community organizations, and are determined to operate in ways that benefit the community."

Heightened Opposition and Proposed Zoning Changes

The project faces heightened opposition from the Santa Cruz City School Board. The Board is voicing concerns and actively organizing to prevent the dispensary's opening. Their proposed solution is a zoning change that would create a 2,000-foot buffer zone between dispensaries and schools and areas with high child activity, like parks. This proposal, if enacted, would essentially be a de facto ban on new dispensaries as it would eliminate all

currently eligible parcels zoned for cannabis businesses. Notably, none of the four existing dispensaries in the city would meet these new requirements.

While concerns regarding the potential impact of cannabis on youth are understandable, it's essential to highlight the lack of evidence linking legal dispensaries to increased access by minors.

This heightened opposition raises significant concerns. If successful, it would cause considerable disruption and harm to two well-established local organizations: The Hook Outlet and WAMM Phytotherapies. Both have a proven track record of serving the community responsibly and are fully compliant with all current laws and regulations. They have every legal right to open at their proposed location.

Call for Support and Action

The Hook Outlet and WAMM Phytotherapies, operating within their legal rights, urge the community and decision-makers to uphold existing ordinances and support their mission to provide affordable medicine and community resources. A petition of support can be found here: [Support WAMM](#).

To learn more and voice your support, please visit www.hookoutlet.com/santa-cruz

About [The Hook Outlet](#)

The Hook Outlet is a Santa Cruz County-based cannabis company focused on community education and providing accessible and affordable cannabis products to its community.

About [WAMM Phytotherapies](#)

WAMM Phytotherapies is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing free or sliding-scale cannabis to low-income patients with serious illnesses.

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