

# COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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January 30, 2024

Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil  
1021 O Street, Suite 7240  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Via email

Assemblyman Joe Patterson  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249  
Via email

Re: Native Directions/HomeCA Substance Treatment Centers

Dear Senator Alvarado-Gil and Assemblymember Patterson,

We are reaching out to you for assistance regarding the Native Directions/HomeCA Substance Treatment Centers planned for development in remote rural neighborhoods in El Dorado County. These planned 30-bed treatment centers have become an issue of great concern to the community and County. We are looking to you to assist with ensuring that the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) is doing everything in its power to oversee these projects and address the negative impacts of these planned projects and, preferably, relocate them to a more suitable location.

In 2021 the State Legislature passed AB 172, which established the Community Care Expansion Program to fund much-needed treatment centers. An unintended consequence of AB 172 is that it completely overrides local land uses and allows nonconforming uses to automatically be considered conforming, which bypasses enforcement of regulations that would normally provide for quality of life, compatibility, and public health and safety. These types of actions by the State Legislature erode the public's trust in government at all levels.

Some of the many concerns include, but are not limited to:

- Conflicting and confusing information and oversight of the DHCS application process and project development.
- Inadequate roads for commercial activity will create hazardous conditions. The intended parcels are served by two lane, narrow, winding roads with no sidewalks and are disconnected from daily services.

- The intended parcels have no access to water and sewer infrastructure as this rural area is only served by wells and conventional septic systems. While we have strong concerns that well water is not adequate to meet the needs of a commercial building without impacting the neighboring parcels, we further question whether well water will meet the stringent health and safety requirements of a medical facility.
- Emergency services are already strained and underfunded in El Dorado County due to low Medi-Cal reimbursement rates. The proposed projects are Medi-Cal dependent and will exacerbate an already fragile system.
- Fire safety is a top concern in the State of California and the planned locations are in a remote, Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone with challenging ingress and egress. El Dorado County has suffered from catastrophic wildfires in 2021 and 2022 and we need to be mindful of placing a vulnerable population of patients, including children, in an area without an in-depth fire plan, hazardous vegetation clearance, adequate ingress/egress, and other safety requirements that would be required of a facility of this size outside of the SB 172 exemption. While we recognize that local land-use conformity does not apply to projects under the SB 172 exemption, we want to make the DHCS and the applicant aware that, at the very least, the California Wildland-Urban Interface Codes should apply to these parcels located in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

We appreciate your interest and engagement in this issue and look forward to working with you to address these concerns.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wendy Thomas" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Wendy Thomas  
Chair, El Dorado County Board of Supervisors