Levesque, Jennifer

From:	Timothy Robertson ████████
Sent:	Tuesday, January 19, 2021 12:59 PM
To:	cityclerk
Subject:	Public comment for agenda item K.4 of Jan 19 City Council Meeting

My name is Tim Robertson and I am the Executive Director of the North Valley Labor Federation, representing over 70 unions and 60,000 union members in Merced and surrounding counties. I am writing in support of Councilmember Ornelas' proposal to modify the cannabis ordinance to include an equity program. As a community it is our shared responsibility to seek new opportunities for those previously marginalized by society. The City of Merced should also explore including strong labor standards in a merit-based process for the awarding of new licenses.

In addition to equity considerations, the application evaluation process should include scoring for an applicant's ability 1) to ensure safe and healthy workplaces, product, and communities; 2) to provide good jobs with livable wages, health insurance, retirement benefits and a fair process to join the a union; 3) and to provide equal work opportunities for women and people of color. Including such criteria in the selection process ensures that new businesses operate in a manner most conducive to the economic growth and safety of our community and that the best operators are evaluated on a level playing field with others.

The North Valley Labor Federation and our affiliates have fought tirelessly at every level of government to ensure workers in this new industry are protected, and we would be very interested in working with the city staff and council to ensure we are taking the high road to economic growth in Merced.

Thank you to Councilmember Ornelas for opening this discussion and for all of you for your consideration. We fully support including considerations for both equity and labor standards in future iterations of the cannabis licensing process in Merced. Thank you for your time.

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