



Dear Parishioners and Friends,

In recent weeks we have heard about the proposed cannabis dispensary proposed on South Michigan Avenue just a few hundred feet North of our grade school.

The following official letter of opposition to the dispensary is being sent to:
Alderman Pat Dowell of the 3rd Ward
The Chicago Zoning Board of Appeal
and Mayor Lori Lightfoot.

A special follow-up notice to our school families will be sent on Sunday with guidance on other efforts being proposed to convince the Zoning Board to reject the application for this location. That information and other assistance for parishioners may be requested from Mr. Steve Dollear at noto1420@gmail.com.

This letter states our official parish position.

October 10, 2020

Alderman Pat Dowell
Chicago Zoning Board of Appeal
Mayor Lori Lightfoot

Re: Special Use Application - Chicago Alternative Health Center, LLC
d/b/a Michigan Avenue Dispensary, Inc.

Leaders in Chicago (letters addressed individually):

We are writing to inform you of our opposition to the proposed special use application by Michigan Avenue Dispensary, Inc. for the operation of a cannabis dispensary at 1420 South Michigan Avenue. Because both our Church structure (1500 South Michigan Avenue) and School structure (1474 South Michigan Avenue) are located within the same block as the proposed dispensary, we are very concerned that the proposed location is too close to our site and will result in serious safety concerns.

While the applicable ordinance [Section 17-9-0129 (3)] provides that no cannabis dispensary may be closer than 500 feet from a church or school, the proposed location of the dispensary is 508 feet from our school on a regular thoroughfare which will require that our students walk past the proposed dispensary going to and coming from school.

The proposed location therefore does not conform to the public policy intent of the law which is to keep students safe from such establishments.

As you know, these types of dispensaries have resulted in lines of waiting patrons, even in pre-COVID-19 times, and we are very concerned that our school students will have to maneuver their way through these groups on their way to and from school which puts them in a vulnerable position. In addition, there are obvious safety concerns with respect to crimes that target dispensaries which could end up in harm to our students if such crimes occur while our students are in the vicinity. The owner, Neal McQueeney, has done little to alleviate our concerns.

In addition, there are vehicle traffic and congestion concerns. Old Saint Mary's Church and School is bounded on the East by South Michigan Avenue and our neighborhood already has regular difficulties related to parking, deliveries, double-parking and heavy traffic on regular days, not to mention the additional difficulties that occur during events at Soldier Field and Grant Park. On the West we are bounded by an alleyway that even in the best of times can be busy and congested - used for traffic shortcuts, deliveries, and regular city services. This is not an easy path to navigate with the only variant egress points (besides 14th & 16th Avenues) being our two parking lots which are used as playgrounds for our children during the school day, and with aftercare. We believe the dispensary will result in additional safety concerns in our neighborhood around the issues of parking, delivery and added congestion in an already heavily trafficked area.

Based on the foregoing, we would respectfully request that you deny your support for the special use application for this dispensary.

The undersigned represent the leadership of Old Saint Mary's Church and School. Other parents and parishioners have advised us that they will be expressing their opposition to the special use application directly to you. Thank you very much for considering our request that you deny the special use application.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Brad Schoeberle, CSP
Pastor – Old St. Mary's Church

Ms. Diana Smith
Principal – Old St. Mary's School

Leaders of the Old St. Mary's Parish Council, School Board and Finance Council