



October 12, 2021

## **Alcohol Justice statement on the recent words and actions of prominent Los Angeles City Council members**

Alcohol Justice would like to express our disappointment, and disillusionment regarding the recordings of the Los Angeles City Council Members & the County Federation of Labor President. The content and callous tone of those comments suggest a deeper disconnect with the city at large.

Alcohol Justice is the alcohol and other drug industries watchdog. We are proponents of policy and legislation that promotes community health, safety, and empowerment. Those goals are unattainable without a culture of accountability, transparency, equity, and justice. The attitudes displayed in the leaked recordings are anything but: they are the essence of machine politics, backroom realpolitik carried out with contempt for constituents of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, with exclusionary homophobia, with an alarmingly casual threat of physical violence to the family of political rivals, and with a complete abandonment of standards of ethical and open governance.

We are in dismay over the content of the conversation and the failure of leadership it implies. Los Angeles is one of the largest cities in the world, and sits at historical and contemporary crossroads for migration, integration, and diversity. It can only be ill-served through language that seeks to hierarchize its residents, and frame the well-being of some constituents as a zero-sum game requiring the disempowerment of others. This fundamentally erodes trust in leadership, including the many electeds who were *not* privy to this conversation and did *not* tacitly breach their public duties.

As an organization whose work depends on organizing diverse communities around a common goal, and whose successes are viewed primarily legislatively, this is a devastating turn. Our opponents are multibillion-dollar, global industries for whom local morbidity and mortality is merely an indicator of profitability. Fighting back against this requires amplifying the voices of residents, local groups, and regional organizations to convince their representatives to act in their name, not the name of money and power. When those representatives display hateful and dismissive perspectives, it undermines our fight to bring principles of justice and equity to community and state health.

Alcohol Justice represents and works for the health of all communities in California. But, as the harms from alcohol tend to concentrate on communities whose power and voices have been stolen, we have to fight hardest to uplift the black, brown, indigenous, and low-income communities. The Los Angeles City Council leadership's behavior has only made the work more difficult.

With this in mind, we emphasize that the recent remarks from these elected officials do not represent us. Alcohol Justice stands for accountability and transparency; for equity and justice; and for the mutual power that comes from uniting across communities. We cannot abide by elected representatives who would use power to build deeper trenches and higher walls. We condemn the remarks of the Council Members and the Federation of Labor President and call for an immediate process of restorative accountability.