



# IMPERIAL VALLEY **REGIONAL** CHAMBER *of* COMMERCE

June 17, 2025

The Honorable Rob Bonta  
Attorney General of California  
California Department of Justice  
1300 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Attorney General Bonta:

On behalf of the Imperial Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to express our strong support for the City of El Centro Police Department's application to the California Department of Justice 2025/26 Tobacco Grant Program.

El Centro is a young, underserved, and predominantly Latino community. According to the most recent U.S. Census figures, nearly 30 percent of the City's approximately 44,000 residents are under the age of 18. More than 20 percent of the population lives below the federal poverty line, the median household income is approximately \$56,000, and only 15 percent of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Additionally, about 86 percent of the City's population identifies as Latino. These factors underscore the importance of providing meaningful support and resources to reduce tobacco-related harm — especially among youth.

Currently, there are no dedicated local funding sources for tobacco enforcement or education. The El Centro Police Department has previously managed tobacco-related responsibilities through general operations, which limits the department's ability to implement focused prevention and enforcement strategies. This grant would allow for the creation of a structured program dedicated specifically to tobacco control, outreach, and education.

The department is requesting \$777,503 to support personnel, training, outreach, and equipment. These funds will supplement existing public safety operations and fund activities that would not otherwise be possible under current budget constraints. Part of our mission at IVRCC is our dedication to promoting community prosperity. By supporting this grant, we believe this education and outreach will give our youth the tools they need to lead healthy lives.

We commend the City of El Centro Police Department for taking this proactive step and respectfully urge your office to give this application your strongest consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sher Cowie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sher Cowie  
President/CEO