



March 31, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
Senate President *pro tem* Toni Atkins
Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814
By email

Re: Do Not Delay or Weaken Standards that Protect Public Health, Air and Climate

Dear Governor Newsom, Speaker Rendon, President *pro tem* Atkins:

We appreciate everything you are doing to get the people of California through the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences. These are trying times for all Californians. Unfortunately, some of the state's biggest polluters are using this public health emergency as an excuse to weaken public health protections.

Seven of the ten smoggiest cities in the United States are in California, and too many of our most vulnerable communities bear the greatest burdens when the air is unhealthy to breathe. Air pollution damages our health through increased risk of asthma attacks, emergency room visits and hospitalizations, lung cancer, heart attacks, strokes and premature death. On top of that, people with respiratory illnesses are at a higher risk of becoming critically ill with COVID-19, and many Californians with respiratory illnesses are concerned about what that will mean for their health. Those at greatest risk for harm include children, the elderly, and those with lung and heart disease. In addition to these air pollution-related impacts, we face the existential threat of climate change. As the Fourth California Climate Assessment noted: "*Climate change poses direct and indirect risks to public health, as people will experience earlier death and worsening illnesses.*" The climate crisis has already taken a severe toll on our state through several devastating wildfires.

Fortunately, California has taken a leading role in addressing the air pollution and climate crises, setting standards that have often provided models for the rest of the country and the rest of

the world. Our state has shown that a healthy environment and growing economy can go hand in hand; in fact, electric vehicles are among the state's leading exports, and a recent report found that EV adoption in California could create 500,000 jobs. All three of you have championed a high road approach to economic development that protects our workers, consumers, public health and natural resources.

Weakening or delaying needed health-based standards would damage both our economy and our health. Scientists warned of a pandemic and scientists have also warned us of the climate crisis, and it has become even more clear that crises like these will only exacerbate economic and health inequality. Smart regulatory standards drive innovation and save lives and money. In fact, a 2011 analysis by US EPA found that the benefits of the Clean Air Act “exceed its costs by a wide margin, making the CAA a very good investment for the nation.” The analysis estimated that the annual dollar value of benefits of air quality improvements would reach a level of approximately \$2.0 trillion in 2020, far offsetting their related costs of \$65 billion.

While the Trump Administration continues, even during this crisis, to roll back sensible standards at the behest of polluters, California must stand firm in defense of public health. All three of you have shown leadership in opposing the rollbacks coming from the federal government, and we need your continued leadership more than ever during this emergency.

Since the beginning of 2019, the state has adopted groundbreaking measures to, among other things, phase out the highly toxic pesticide chlorpyrifos, transition transit buses to zero emissions from the tailpipe, and finally require smog checks for heavy-duty diesel trucks. We must continue to make progress against pollution by requiring zero-emission operations from trucks, vessels at berth, and transport refrigeration units, among other important steps that have been in process for years. These measures are particularly essential for our disadvantaged communities, which are facing the worst impacts of air pollution while having the fewest resources with which to mitigate those impacts. On the other hand, failure to follow through on planned reductions in emissions would result in thousands of premature deaths and preventable illnesses, as well as the threat of federal sanctions for failure to attain the legally enforceable standards set under the Clean Air Act.

We fully recognize the magnitude of the crisis that threatens not only our health but also our economy. We urge you to put Californians to work building the infrastructure of the clean energy/sustainable transportation economy that we need. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss a “green stimulus” package that could create jobs while reducing emissions to ensure our communities are resilient in the face of any crisis.

Respectfully,

Bill Magavern
Policy Director
Coalition for Clean Air

Juan Altamirano
Associate Director of Policy
Audubon California

Eddie Ahn
Executive Director
Brightline Defense

Nick Lapis
Director of Advocacy
Californians Against Waste

Dave Snyder

Executive Director
California Bicycle Coalition

Neena Mohan

Climate Justice Program Associate
California Environmental Justice Alliance
(CEJA)

Melissa Romero

Legislative Affairs Manager
California League of Conservation Voters

Chuck Mills

Public Policy & Grants Director
California ReLeaf

Brian Nowicki

California Climate Policy Director
Center for Biological Diversity

Linda Rudolph, MD

Director
Center for Climate Change and Health

Chanell Fletcher

Executive Director
ClimatePlan

Cameron Gray

Senior Manager, Transportation & Climate
Programs
Community Environmental Council

Alvaro Sanchez

Environmental Equity Director
The Greenlining Institute

Dan Jacobson

State Director
Environment California

Lauren Navarro

Sr. Manager, Regulatory & Legislative Affairs
Environmental Defense Fund

Arnold Sowell Jr.

Executive Director
NextGen California

Matthew Baker

Policy Director
Planning & Conservation League

Joel Ervice

Associate Director
Regional Asthma Management and Prevention

Kathryn Phillips

Director
Sierra Club California

Nicole Kemeny

President
350 Silicon Valley