

April 27, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Health and Air Pollution Experts Call for Maintaining Clean Air and Climate Progress

Dear Governor Newsom,

As public health and air pollution experts in California, we appreciate and thank you for your leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our state is facing a widespread and acute public health and economic crisis. We write to you out of concern that certain industries are using this public health emergency to stop, delay, or otherwise weaken California's environmental and public health protections. We request that the state remains committed to protections under current development, does not delay implementation of these regulations, and resists efforts to weaken existing protections.

Environmental regulations and rulemakings, such as the Advanced Clean Trucks Regulation, Transport Refrigeration Unit Regulation, and At-Berth Regulation, are critical to reducing air pollution and should continue to move forward with steps to ensure public participation. Now more than ever, California must not relent in being a leader on clean air standards that help protect our air and climate.

Although air pollution is currently reduced across the state because of stay at home orders,¹ this is a temporary effect and the chronic impacts of decades of pollution remain. In fact, new research suggests that long term exposure to air pollution, such as from diesel emissions, is associated with higher risk of death from COVID-19.² Our current crisis exposes how disproportionate levels of air pollution and heightened risk of respiratory diseases faced by low income communities and communities of color could make COVID-19 worse for them. We cannot waiver on California's commitment to protecting and pursuing clean air for all.

Unfortunately, some in the oil and gas, diesel, truck, and port industries are using the pandemic to undermine critical environmental rules. Their requests to undo or delay regulations will have long-lasting effects on efforts to protect people and our environment. Rulemakings that have been worked on for years, for example the Advanced Clean Trucks standard that provides a historic opportunity for manufacturers to electrify the heavy-duty transportation sector, can improve the health and air of all Californians for decades to come. We ask that you do not heed these industry attempts, and that California moves forward on critical and time-sensitive rulemaking. We also acknowledge the health crisis has affected impacted normal procedures for public participation, and support efforts to maximize public participation in an inclusive and transparent manner during stay at home orders.

The pandemic is causing much pain throughout our state, but we are heartened and encouraged by your thoughtful and decisive leadership on the COVID-19 crisis. You have respected the advice of scientists throughout this emergency. California is a leader and must continue to show the world how evidence-based decision-making and standing up for science protects people and improves lives.

¹ <https://calmatters.org/health/2020/04/as-californians-stay-at-home-air-quality-improves-for-now/>

² <https://blog.ucsusa.org/gretchen-goldman/new-harvard-study-links-covid-deaths-and-air-pollution-an-interview-with-study-author-dr-francesca-dominici>

Sincerely,

The Undersigned

Institutional affiliations are listed as provided by signers for identification purposes only, and do not imply endorsement of the letter by those institutions.

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