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RISING



CENTRAL CALIFORNIA  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NETWORK



CAEJ



CALIFORNIA  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
JUSTICE ALLIANCE



Long Beach Alliance for  
Children with Asthma



CENTER ON  
RACE, POVERTY  
& THE ENVIRONMENT



June 28, 2021

Board Members  
South Coast Air Quality Management District  
21865 Copley Drive  
Diamond Bar, California 91765

Re: Investments for NOx medium- and heavy-duty trucks

Dear Chairman Benoit and members of the South Coast Air Quality Management District Board,

The environmental justice communities of the South Coast Air Basin and the San Joaquin Valley are writing this letter to make it clear once more that **we do not support any investments**

**and lobbying that pursues transitioning diesel truck fleets to near-zero or natural gas.** The use of gas for transport has been proven to be dangerous, not only for the freight communities of Southern California, but also to the various communities in the Central Valley and across the state who deal with the production and distribution of this toxic fuel. We believe the South Coast AQMD's zealous push for near-zero natural gas engines is perpetuating environmental injustice in the Central Valley because the quest to advance so-called "renewable natural gas" means continued investments in large factory farming operations that perpetuate harm on communities. Investing in natural gas is a costly error that will have severe air quality, climate, and respiratory health impacts on our families.

Our organizations are composed of thousands of residents that live in communities that have experienced systematic racism and exclusion from critical decisions that relate to the freight industry and the impacts on our health. The decades-long impacts brought forth by the movement of goods from fossil fuel trucks, added with the complacency from government institutions and business entities, have left generations of families suffering from a reduced quality of life that many of us have experienced first hand.

Diesel pollution from trucks forms NOx and PM2.5 pollution that contains cancer-causing substances that make it responsible for about 70 percent of cancer risk related to air toxins in California. It has resulted in elevated asthma and cancer rates for people living next to ports, warehouses, and rail yards in Southern California. It turns out that NOx and particle pollution from gas powered trucks is often just as high as those from diesel trucks. Additionally, the production of biogas is known to leak into groundwater, contaminating drinking water sources and generating toxic air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions that hurt communities of color in the Central Valley. In essence, investments in so-called natural gas provide a "bridge fuel" to nowhere, and instead will work to continue to exacerbate the aforementioned impacts on our communities. What we need are actions that will work to eliminate toxic fossil fuel emissions altogether. We will not wait for an explosion or accident to happen for you to realize that this cannot be the direction we go towards.

We are disappointed that our years of raising concerns about the use of gas for transport through letters, meetings, and direct conversations with AQMD officials and board members have been misconstrued. What is even more frustrating is that the AQMD openly welcomes and lobbies for natural gas by requesting the state to subsidize this dated and dangerous technology. We want to take this opportunity to clarify now that our communities will not settle for anything less than zero-emission medium- and heavy-duty vehicles in our neighborhoods. As residents who have had to shoulder the real-time painful burden and costs of the fossil fuel industry while they profit off our lungs and destroy our climate - we need nothing less than zero to replace the years of abuse that we have been subjected to.

Environmental justice groups from the South Coast and Central Valley have come together to request that your agency respect our concerns. We acknowledge that the SCAQMD is making inroads when it comes to addressing poor air quality, as proven with the adoption of the

warehouse indirect source rule last month. However, if the agency is truly invested in pursuing environmental justice for our communities, they must understand that locking us into decades of dependence on so-called natural gas will delay clean air progress. We have made it clear where we stand. Therefore, we demand that you truly stand with us in promoting and pursuing 100% zero-emissions freight and refuse further subsidization of the gas industry.

Sincerely,

Taylor Thomas  
East Yard Communities for Environmental  
Justice

Andrea Vidaurre  
Peoples Collective for Environmental  
Justice

Ricardo Pulido  
Community Dreams

Alma Marquez  
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