







March 8, 2023

The Honorable Ben Allen
Chair of Senate Environmental Quality
California State Senate

Re: Support for SB 12 (Stern)

Dear Senator Allen,

We are writing you in support of SB 12, a bill to accelerate the state's statutory greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction target from 40% by 2030 to at least 55% by 2030. The

rapidly worsening climate crisis demands nothing less. As UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said, “it’s code red for humanity,” time is running out, and we must act decisively starting now. “2023 is a year of reckoning. It must be a year of game-changing climate action” including the urgent priority of halving emissions this decade.¹

In 2021, Governor Newsom sent a letter to the California Air Resources Board (CARB) asking them to look at pathways to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035. Last July, after the release of the draft Scoping Plan Update, the Governor again wrote CARB noting that “because of the severity of the impacts California faces, we need to up our game” in addressing the climate crisis. He pledged his commitment to work “with the Legislature in the coming weeks to make carbon neutrality state law and to increase our ambition towards our 2030 climate goals.”

Many studies conducted in the years since the release of the 2018 United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 1.5C report support the Governor’s desire for a more ambitious target and have found that “[w]e have underestimated the risks of unleashing irreversible change. The next decade is our window.”² In a paper authored with other climate-experts, Professor Daniel Kammen, Chair of UC Berkeley’s Energy and Resources Group, agrees that “long an innovator in this arena, California is falling behind in its climate leadership and would benefit economically and ecologically, and in terms of social justice, by establishing more aggressive totals that enable a carbon-negative economy.”³

Recently, in its Scoping Plan, CARB proposed that the state could exceed the ambition of its statutory target of 40% and achieve a 48% reduction in GHGs by 2030. Even with this increase, California is behind many of our closest allies. The European Union’s target for reducing emissions by 2030 is 62% below 2005 levels (EU emissions were slightly lower in 2005 than 1990 making this relatively comparable to California’s baseline of 1990).⁴ Denmark has set a more ambitious target of a 70% reduction while the United Kingdom aims for a 68% cut in emissions below 1990 levels by 2030.

With California expending a projected \$48 billion over the next five years for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, and \$374 billion being invested nationally by the federal government through the Inflation Reduction Act over the next decade, it is time for California to step up its leadership in this arena. SB 12 would set California on the path to do just that by establishing a statutory goal for the state to achieve a minimum of 55% emissions

¹ UN News, Feb. 6, 2023. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133192#>

² Lenton, Rockstrom, Gaffney, Rahmstorf, Richardson, Steffen, Schyellnhuber. Nature, Nov 27 2019 <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03595-0>

³ Kammen et al. Accelerating the timeline for climate action in California. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2103.07801>

⁴ <https://www.theenergymix.com/2022/12/18/eu-boosts-industrial-emissions-target-from-43-to-62-by-2030/> and <https://www.eea.europa.eu/ims/total-greenhouse-gas-emission-trends>

reduction by 2030, commensurate with new state funding and positioning the state to leverage significant new federal and private investments.

In addition, there are substantial lifesaving health benefits resulting from not producing, refining, transporting, and using polluting fossil fuels, especially urgent for frontline communities⁵ that bear the brunt of our fossil fuel economy and climate change. Fossil fuel air pollution is responsible for one in five deaths globally every year⁶ and leads to a [shortening of people's lives by an average of three years](#) – an impact greater than smoking, HIV/AIDS, vector-borne diseases, and violence.⁷ Women exposed to high temperatures or air pollution are more likely to have premature, underweight or stillborn babies.⁸ Over 7.3 million Californians live within one mile of oil and gas wells and are exposed to carcinogens and other toxic compounds on a regular basis.⁹ During extreme heat waves, fossil gas peaker plants are used to provide additional electricity and these are almost always situated in frontline communities, adding to their pollution burden. Transitioning rapidly to a carbon free economy will help restore health, safety and quality of life for these frontline communities.

A recent report supports these conclusions showing that eliminating fossil fuel air pollution in buildings and transportation in California will “yield monetized health benefits of \$44 billion per year.”¹⁰ The benefits are due to improved health and the avoidance of 4,950 premature deaths per year. Much of these benefits would accrue in disadvantaged communities, which have historically borne a disproportionately high share of air quality impacts from energy use.”

The Climate Center recently conducted an analysis using Energy Innovation’s Energy Policy Simulator model outlining a pathway to achieve 65% below 1990 levels by 2030 which has been provided to this committee.¹¹ Although this is a very ambitious goal, with political leadership, bold policy, major investment, and key reforms, it is achievable. Models generally do not accurately account for how swiftly innovation can change the market when policy creates the stable environment necessary to invest at scale.¹² With the political will, we can likely go farther, even faster, commensurate with the rapidly worsening climate crisis.

There are compelling economic, health and equity reasons for acting now and leading the way

⁵ <https://www.ethree.com/new-e3-reports-quantify-the-health-benefits-of-reducing-fossil-fuel-use-in-california/>

⁶ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0013935121000487#preview-section-abstract>

⁷ <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/04032020/air-pollution-shortens-life-expectancy-fossil-fuel/>

⁸ Bekkar B, Pacheco S, Basu R, DeNicola N. Association of Air Pollution and Heat Exposure With Preterm Birth, Low Birth Weight, and Stillbirth in the US: A Systematic Review. JAMA Netw Open. 2020;3(6):e208243. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.8243

⁹ <https://www.fracktracker.org/2020/12/people-and-production/>

¹⁰ <https://www.ethree.com/new-e3-reports-quantify-the-health-benefits-of-reducing-fossil-fuel-use-in-california/>

¹¹ https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jj_Q-aOlxAAtTRSraJxZIXjQr3e8TOtYf/edit

¹² https://carbontracker.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Transition-Infographic_S-curves3-01.png?mc_cid=3107013f48&mc_eid=ff71bfc15b

in emissions reduction. Failing to act or acting too slowly will only increase the costs of climate change damages¹³ since these damage costs escalate in a non-linear fashion over time.¹⁴ The cost of inaction or insufficient action in terms of lives and dollars is enormous, growing, and unjustifiable given the many cost-effective early action opportunities that now exist.

With limited time remaining to avert a full on climate catastrophe, California must take courageous and bold action. SB 12 is a significant step forward on that path. Enacting more ambitious emissions reductions goals for 2030, and implementing the strategies to get there prioritizing frontline communities, will not only re-establish the state as an international climate leader but will also galvanize the private sector to redouble its efforts to develop the technologies and make the required investments needed to avoid the worst outcomes of climate change.

SB 12 will yield economic benefits from the innovation unleashed, while improving the well-being and health of low-income and frontline communities especially at risk from climate change damages and environmental inequities.

Sincerely,

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¹³ [Deloitte research reveals inaction on climate change could cost the world's economy US\\$178 trillion by 2070](#)

¹⁴ Sampling of the many reports on the costs of delay as well as inadequate action and investments:

- [The Costs of Delay](#), Energy Innovation, Jan 2021
- [A Fair and Sustainable Economic Recovery Program for California](#), Political Econ. Research Institute, June 2020.
- [10 Charts Show the Economic Benefits of US Climate Action](#), World Resources Institute, Jul 2020

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