



April 3, 2023

The Honorable Lena Gonzalez
 1021 O Street, Suite 7720,

Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for Senate Bill (SB) 556 – Oil & Gas Pollution Accountability Act

Dear Senator Gonzalez,

We, the undersigned, write to express our strong support for Senate Bill 556. This important bill holds the oil and gas industry accountable by creating a liability presumption for a respiratory ailment in a senior or child, a pre-term birth or high-risk pregnancy suffered by a pregnant person, and a person's cancer diagnosis if they resided within a specified proximity known as a health protective zone of an oil and gas production facility or well head.

Living near oil wells and gas production facilities increases one's risk of asthma, respiratory problems, pre term births, high-risk pregnancies, and cancer. That is why the legislature passed, and in 2022 the Governor signed, SB 1137 (Gonzalez) to establish health protection zones of 3,200 feet around oil and gas wells to protect the health of all Californians.

Over 2.1 million Californians live within half a mile of oil and gas wells, and that number will continue to increase with the addition of new wells. Moreover, environmental impacts disproportionately affect communities that are low income and largely of color. One third of the Californians who live near wells are additionally burdened by environmental pollution and over 90% are people of color.

Even after the passage of SB 1137, during the fourth quarter of 2022, state oil regulators approved at least 100 drilling permits for wells within the 3,200-foot zone, according to analysis by FracTracker Alliance.¹ In the first quarter of 2023, FracTracker reports that state regulators approved another 556 permits within those health protective zones.

If oil and gas companies are going to continue to endanger the health of California residents, it is only fair they pay the costs when those residents get sick.

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<https://consumerwatchdog.org/energy/4th-quarter-oil-permit-approvals-show-steep-rise-within-protective-buffer-zones-as-states-top-oil-regulator-steps-down-advocacy-groups-report/>

SB 556 creates the presumption that the harms caused to the health of children, the elderly, and pregnant people who have lived near oil wells for the past two years, were caused by exposure to an oil or gas well. The oil well operator can rebut that presumption if the person's health problems were caused by something else, such as exposure to different toxins or genetics.

We need SB 556 to protect our most vulnerable residents from our most powerful polluters. We believe oil companies should be held accountable for the health harms they cause. Therefore, we urge your support of the Oil & Gas Pollution Accountability Act.

Sincerely,

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