

#### Our Mission

We're working to rapidly reduce climate pollution at scale, starting in California.

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07/05/2023

The Honorable Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia  
Chair, Utilities & Energy Committee  
1021 O Street, Room 164  
Sacramento, CA 95814

#### RE: SB 781 (Stern) – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Garcia and Vice Chair Patterson,

The Climate Center supports Senate Bill 781, which would not only require California's prioritization of reducing methane, but also facilitate timely transition to the import of only natural gas that has been certified to have low-methane emissions. These steps will represent significant and rapid greenhouse gas reduction.

The Climate Center, founded in 2001, is focused on equitably reducing climate pollution at the speed and scale necessary to secure a climate-safe future. We catalyze change through an ambitious and achievable vision, developing science-based research to drive policy, and mobilizing a powerful coalition of climate advocates across sectors. We believe that to address the climate crisis we need to expedite the rapid deployment of distributed energy resources and build transmission to support utility scale renewables.

Methane is a potent short-lived climate pollutant, with about 80 times the climate forcing impact as CO<sub>2</sub> over a 20 year period, which means that the reduction of methane emissions is the **most significant and cost-effective way** to slow the rate of warming in the near term.<sup>1</sup> California's leading efforts to identify and reduce methane emissions reach many sources, but not perhaps the most readily addressable – imported natural gas. This is despite the fact that imported natural gas constitutes over

<sup>1</sup> <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/abf9c8>

90 percent of California's natural gas supplies, making it the largest energy source serving the state. The California Air Resource Board's own Short-lived Climate Pollutants (SLCP) Reduction Strategy states that, "more may need to be done to reduce emissions from pipelines and other equipment out-of-state. There may be steps that California agencies or utilities can take to ensure that infrastructure supplying gas to the state has minimal leakage, and to ensure that natural gas is providing environmental benefits compared to use of other fossil fuels in the State."

SB 781 takes the necessary steps toward meeting this need by requiring:

- State agencies prioritize strategies to reduce methane emissions, including emissions from imported natural gas, where feasible and cost effective.
- Natural gas procured on behalf of state agencies to be certified as producing low-methane emissions by no later than December 31, 2025.
- CARB, the CPUC, and other relevant agencies to consider programs, or changes to existing programs, in a timely manner to reduce methane emissions, including emissions from imported natural gas procured by utilities and other large gas users.
- CARB to annually request and incorporate into the existing report pursuant to AB 2195 (Chau, 2018):
  - o Information from utilities and other large gas users regarding their procurement and use of natural gas certified to have a methane emissions intensity of less than .2 percent.
  - o An estimate of potential greenhouse gas emissions reductions associated with the use of natural gas certified to have a methane emissions intensity of less than .2 percent.

The best way to address climate change in the near-term is to reduce emissions of potent short-lived climate pollutants that are both powerful climate forcers and harmful air pollutants. Our fossil fuel energy systems are one of the largest sources of methane emissions in the U.S., and one of the easiest and lowest cost targets to reduce emissions. Even while we focus on transitioning away from fossil fuels to a 100% clean energy system, we can, and should focus on minimizing the impacts of our ongoing fossil fuel use now, including methane emissions from imported natural gas. SB 781 takes important steps to reduce the impact of California's continued use of fossil gas. We urge AYE votes in the Assembly Utilities & Energy Committee.

Sincerely,



Ellie Cohen  
Chief Executive Officer