



April 8, 2020

Chair Nichols and Members of the Board
California Air Resources Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Nichols and Members of the Board,

The health and economic toll of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is already without equal, and we recognize that addressing the health and safety of communities and workers affected by the virus is paramount. However, addressing this immediate crisis should not come at the expense of other public health concerns: namely air pollution and climate change.

Sadly, big polluters are exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic to attack critical environmental rules. We write during this unprecedented health crisis to urge you to preserve environmental regulations and continue advancing rulemakings that protect our air and support economic growth, such as the Advanced Clean Truck rule, Transport Refrigeration Units regulation, and At-berth rules, and to continue taking appropriate steps to maximize public participation. As we work together to navigate this challenging time, science-based solutions that provide measurable health, environmental, and economic benefits are more crucial than ever.

As our healthcare system strains in response to COVID-19, CARB regulations that improve public health are essential. Californians continue to suffer from the worst air in the nation: seven of the top ten most ozone-choked cities in America are in California.¹ Poor air quality means higher rates of asthma and other severe respiratory diseases, as well as a higher risk of hospitalization, emergency room visits, and premature death.² For children and adults with asthma, an asthma attack and visit to the emergency room now comes with the added risk of exposure to COVID-19. Current research is finding people who suffer from respiratory diseases are also at increased risk of severe illness, or complications, from the coronavirus.³ CARB must continue to protect our air throughout this pandemic to prevent families from facing these compounding health risks.

Moreover, air pollution disproportionately harms the most vulnerable among us, including children, seniors, low-income communities, and communities of color.⁴ Many of these communities are also disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Exacerbating these air pollution impacts are the devastating consequences of climate change. As Californians, we have witnessed firsthand the

¹ <http://www.stateoftheair.org/key-findings/>

² <https://www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/air-pollution-current-and-future-challenges>

³ Exposure to air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States. Xiao Wu, Rachel C. Nethery, Benjamin M. Sabath, Danielle Braun, Francesca Dominici. medRxiv 2020.04.05.20054502; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.04.05.20054502>

⁴ <https://www.lung.org/clean-air/outdoors/who-is-at-risk/disparities>



severe cost in people and capital from climate-induced droughts, wildfires, and elevated temperatures that all contribute further to poor air quality and stifle economic activity.

Unlike the current federal Administration, which continues to ignore science and attack key environmental laws, CARB has repeatedly demonstrated to the nation and the world that regulations to protect our air not only safeguard our health and the environment but are vital drivers of economic growth. The clean technology sector, anchored by strong regulations, is one of California's most indispensable industries that supports over half a million jobs statewide.⁵Clean technologies, such as electric vehicles, are a top state export and a valuable source of innovation.⁶

We fully recognize the magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis that threatens not only the health of Californians but also their businesses. In this challenging time, there is a renewed urgency for essential environmental regulations if we are to emerge from this crisis a more resilient society that grows jobs, safeguards public health, and protects our climate and the air we breathe.

Sincerely,

Patricio Portillo

Natural Resources Defense Council

⁵ <https://e2.org/reports/clean-jobs-california-2019/>

⁶ <https://business.ca.gov/industries/zero-emission-vehicles/>