

(Letter to Governor from Steering Committee)

June 23, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for AB 617 Implementation Funding in 2020-2021 Budget

Dear Governor Newsom:

The AB 617 Steering Committee for the Portside Environmental Justice Communities (“Portside”) respectfully urges you to retain the full \$50 million allocated by the Legislature for AB 617 Implementation in the final 2020-2021 Budget. The funding is critical for the AB 617 program to continue its work and fulfill its promise for better air quality in all AB 617 communities, as well as to benefit disadvantaged communities throughout California.

The Portside areas include the San Diego communities of Barrio Logan, Logan Heights, and Sherman Heights, and the west National City community. These are communities that have more than their share of air pollution and are also at higher risk of death from COVID-19. As you know, COVID-19 impacts are more severe in areas with higher levels of air pollution. A Harvard study released April 5, 2020 and updated April 22, 2020, found that **an increase of only 1 µg/m³ in PM_{2.5} is associated with an 8% increase in the COVID-19 death rate.**¹

The Steering Committee has been meeting since October of 2018 and includes a wide range of individuals and agencies. For the first year of the program, the San Diego Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD) set up an intensive monitoring program and compiled information on air emissions within our communities. The Steering Committee advised SDAPCD on possible locations where monitoring would be useful and reviewed early monitoring results.

This year, we are actively engaged in the important work of developing our Community Emissions Reduction Program; this is the document that will guide the region in reducing the disproportionate and unjust burden of air pollution on these disadvantaged communities. This work is in its most active phase, as we all work together to identify regulatory, land use, technological, programmatic, and other strategies to reduce the impact of air pollution in Portside. **A failure to fund AB 617 Implementation would pull the plug on this work at the exact moment when it is most important that we continue.**

As we understand it, the Implementation funding is the only source of funding for the SDAPCD to staff AB 617 in our region. Whereas most or all the Steering Committee members are actively participating in development of the CERP, none of it could continue without the SDAPCD. It is

¹ 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>

critical that the 2020-2021 Budget includes allocations not only for incentives, but for the continued work of the Steering Committee and the SDAPCD.

The Portside Steering Committee includes residents of the Portside communities, medical experts, organized labor, environmental and social justice organizations, local industry, SDG&E, and representatives of local governmental agencies including the cities, the Port, our regional planning organization SANDAG, and CalTrans. We are united in our recognition of the importance of funding AB 617 implementation so that our work can continue. We urge you to sign the budget with the AB 617 implementation funding as allocated by the Legislature. Thank you.