June 26, 2020

Letter of Support for Adoption of the Mayors' Climate Commission Recommendations

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for your leadership and all of your tireless efforts regarding the Mayors' Commission on Climate Change, and working on behalf of the Cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento to achieve carbon zero by no later than 2045 (and ideally sooner).

Over the past year, I had the privilege and opportunity to serve as a Co-Lead for the Commission's Community Health and Resiliency Technical Advisory Committee (CH&R TAC). I am proud of the final recommendations developed by members of the CH&R TAC, and am honored to have worked with such a diverse, engaged, thoughtful, knowledgeable, and passionate group of individuals that comprised the TAC, along with my TAC Co-Lead, Kathleen Ave, and the Local Government Commission team led by Kate Meis, featuring Helena Rhim and the incomparable Julia Kim. I attended every Commission meeting since the very first one in November 2018 and followed the developments of the other TACs, and am exceedingly impressed with their efforts and recommendations as well.

Today, I write to you in my capacity as both a resident of the Sacramento region for the last 21 years, and as a public health professional working on a daily basis to prevent the worst human health impacts associated with climate change, particularly on populations facing existing social, environmental, economic, and racial inequities. I also bring with me nearly two decades of prior training and experience in the fields of environmental policy and planning, sustainability, and green building and design.

We are living through an unprecedented time right now, experiencing three interrelated and converging crises: COVID-19 and the associated economic fall-out; severe inequities along income, wealth, and particularly racial lines; and, the climate crisis. All of us are being affected, but those most vulnerable and historically marginalized among us are usually the ones hurt first and worst. And through all of this, we cannot escape the reality that *health comes first*. COVID-19 has made it painfully clear that our economy depends on the health and well-being of our people and communities. The public outrage around police brutality and racial injustice are centered around the fundamental right to live, and to be able to lead full and healthy lives no matter the color of our skin. Underlying all of this is our reliance on the health and well-being of the natural environments and ecological systems that sustain us, and the stability of our climatic conditions.

Climate change has been described as the greatest public health threat of our time—even greater than the current pandemic. But the good news is that addressing climate change presents the *greatest opportunity for advancing public health and equity*. We see the multiple—and often mutually reinforcing—benefits of climate actions reflected in the Commission's Climate Recommendations:

- Sustainable land use and infill growth can help shrink the distances between where we live, work, and play, making it easier to walk or bike to where we want to go, along with reducing air pollution and transportation costs.
- Electrifying buildings and homes can reduce greenhouse gas and air pollution emissions, and protect human health. A recent report released by researchers at the UCLA Fielding School of Public found that "under a 2018 scenario where all residential gas appliances were transitioned to clean-energy electric appliances, the reduction of secondary nitrate fine particulate matter

(PM2.5) and primary PM2.5 would result in *354 fewer deaths, and 596 and 304 fewer cases of acute and chronic bronchitis*, respectively." This translates to "approximately *$3.5 billion in monetized health benefits* for just one year" for California[1].

- Active transportation can increase our physical activity levels and significantly improve health outcomes. A 2017 report commissioned by the California Department of Public Health determined that for the Sacramento region, meeting state goals for increased walking and cycling levels could *reduce chronic diseases and prevent between 125 - 635 deaths annually and 3,314 - 14,129 years of life lost to disability*. For the state overall, the monetized value of preventing premature deaths and disability ranged conservatively from *$1 billion to $15.5 billion per year*[2].
- Transit and shared mobility options can provide more affordable transportation options, and together with zero-emission vehicles (and active transportation), can substantially reduce carbon and air pollution emissions while increasing mobility access and equity.
- Urban greening and forestry help reduce the urban heat island effect, provide shade, encourage outdoor activities and increased physical activity, relieve stress, sequester carbon, reduce cooling-energy loads, and lower utility bills.
- Sustainable food systems can increase access to healthy and affordable food for all, reduce carbon emissions, support local agricultural jobs, and reduce food waste.
- Community climate resilience can reduce vulnerabilities to climate impacts, and increase our capacity to plan and prepare for, withstand, recover and bounce forward from climate-related and other disruptions.

The Climate Commissions' Recommendations present solutions that significantly reduce carbon emissions, provide substantial cost-savings over time, promote and protect our health and well-being, advance equity, and increase our resilience to external shocks, whether climate-related or virus-related. As such, I strongly **support the adoption of the report and final recommendations of the Mayors' Commission on Climate Change**, and am committed to supporting efforts to implement these actions.

We must take bold and decisive action now—for all of us, particularly those most marginalized, and, for my nephew and niece, who are only starting to learn how to navigate this world. Thank you for your time and attention.

In solidarity and health, and with respect,

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[1] Zhu, Y., R. Connolly, Y. Lin, T. Mathew, and Z. Wang. 2020. *Effects of Residential Gas Appliances on Indoor and Outdoor Air Quality and Public Health in California*. UCLA Fielding School of Public Health, Department of Environmental Health Sciences. Accessible: https://ucla.app.box.com/s/xyzt8jc1ixnetiv0269qe704wu0ihif7

[2] Maizlish, N. 2017. *Increasing Walking, Cycling, and Transit: Improving Californians' Health, Saving Costs, and Reducing Greenhouse Gases*. Final Report for the Office of Health Equity, California Department of Public Health. Accessible: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OHE/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Maizlish-2016-Increasing-Walking-Cycling-Transit-Technical-Report-rev8-17-ADA.pdf