



June 21, 2017

Senator Kevin de León  
 State Capitol, Room 205  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 100 Renewable Portfolio Standard Program -- Support**

Dear Senator de León:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we would like to express our support for SB 100 and appreciation for your efforts as the bill’s author. Strengthening and accelerating the targets in California’s Renewable Portfolio Standard to ultimately achieve 100% renewable energy by 2045 is an important step forward for climate, health, and equity.

As health professionals, we see the health impacts on Californians of our current reliance on fossil fuels for our energy supplies – whether it is treating asthma attacks exacerbated by air pollution or treating heat-related illnesses due to a warming climate. And, these health impacts are only expected to worsen with rising temperatures. Measures such as SB 100 that promote the shift away from fossil fuels to cleaner, safer alternatives are thus vitally important for health.

Climate change is the greatest health challenge of this century. The electric power sector is one of the largest sources of climate pollution, responsible for nearly 1/3 of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the U.S., and nearly one-fifth of California’s GHG emissions. Almost half (44 percent) of California’s electricity comes from natural gas, which is associated with emissions of a particularly potent greenhouse gas - methane. Methane is 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide over its first 20 years

in the atmosphere.<sup>1</sup> Switching California from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy is a critical path to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions – both for California and the nation.

At the same time, the health benefits of SB 100 go beyond reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Electricity production contributes to air, water, and soil pollution, and harms our health in many ways. Likewise, extraction, storage, and transport of the natural gas used in electricity production can result in negative health impacts due to associated emissions of particulate matter, methane, and volatile organic compounds including the carcinogen benzene. Methane and VOCs also contribute to ground-level ozone (smog). California residents are no stranger to some of the more significant health and safety risks of natural gas, as witnessed by the illness and forced evacuations resulting from the massive methane gas leak at Aliso Canyon and the tragic loss of life and homes in San Bruno. Reducing our reliance on natural gas and other fossil fuels by switching to renewable energy will reduce these risks and resulting impacts.

Unfortunately, low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately burdened by air pollution generated by fossil fuel use. For example, in California, Blacks and American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) are disproportionately affected by asthma – a condition worsened by air pollution. Asthma prevalence among Blacks is about 30% higher than among Whites, while asthma prevalence among AI/AN is more than 40% higher than among Whites.<sup>2</sup> Switching to cleaner energy sources and renewable electricity can address these unjust health inequities by offering substantial benefits for health, including reductions in asthma and other respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease and premature deaths.

SB 100 will also show leadership to other states and countries on the importance of moving away from all fossil fuel-based sources of electricity, including coal fired plants. While California has substantially reduced dependence on coal, coal plants are a major source of pollution across the country. Air pollution from burning coal causes over 13,000 deaths and 20,000 heart attacks in the U.S. each year.<sup>3</sup> And burning coal in China increases ozone levels along the west coast, making it harder for California to meet air quality standards.<sup>4</sup>

With SB 100, California has the opportunity to set the standard nationally for addressing climate change and improve health by cleaning up the electricity sector. SB 100 would set some of the most aggressive renewable energy targets in the country. Greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution from coal-fired power plants in other states do not know state borders. To the extent that other states dependent on fossil fuels follow California's lead, California's efforts to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions under SB 100 will benefit even further.

Switching from fossil fuels to clean, safe, renewable energy - like wind, solar and hydroelectric - is one of the most important things we can do for the climate and for our health. SB 100, and its acceleration of the switch to renewable energy, is an important step towards a healthier California.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-bad-of-a-greenhouse-gas-is-methane/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.californiabreathing.org/asthma-data/cal-asthma-report>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.catf.us/resources/publications/files/The\\_Toll\\_from\\_Coal.pdf](http://www.catf.us/resources/publications/files/The_Toll_from_Coal.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nature.com/ngo/journal/v8/n9/full/ngo2493.html>

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