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Environmental Justice Groups Call for Full, Coordinated Phase Out of Fossil Fuels by 2045 in California's Climate Change Scoping Plan

Groups urge CARB to scale up investments in mass transit, electric car and truck programs for low-income Californians

Sacramento, CA | March 10, 2022 - On Wednesday, 23 California environmental justice and public health organizations and representatives, including members of the Environmental Justice Advisory Committee (EJAC), urged the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to adopt an equitable, bold and transformative economy-wide plan for climate action. In a letter sent Wednesday, environmental justice groups called on CARB to set California on a path toward a **full, coordinated phaseout of polluting oil refineries by 2045**; scaled up investments in mass transit, electric car and truck programs for low-income Californians; and the **elimination of climate policy dead-ends** in the 2022 climate change scoping plan.

"To protect our communities' health and meet the scale and urgency of the climate crisis, the state must stop pollution at the smokestacks and at the tailpipe. As working class people of color face heatwaves, blackouts, layoffs and surging hospital bills we cannot continue to allow some of the world's biggest corporations to profit off of polluting our air and destabilizing our climate. The Governor's commitment to a phaseout of oil extraction is a great step, but we cannot meet the scale of the climate crisis without a full, economy-wide fossil fuel phaseout," **said Sharifa Taylor, Staff Researcher with Communities for a Better Environment and Co-Chair of the EJAC.** "A phaseout determined by the market alone will leave people out in the cold. Now is the time to plan for a truly equitable transition - with protections for workers and our communities."

The 2022 Climate Change Scoping Plan, [pursuant to the state's 2006 Global Warming Solutions Act](#), is a statewide policy blueprint to determine how the state will meet its climate goals over the next 20 years. California is the 5th largest economy in the world and is responsible for 418.2 million metric tons of CO2 annually. There are [2.1 million Californians living within 1 mile of an oil or gas well statewide](#) and millions of Californians living within a mile of an industrial polluter statewide. Living close to an oil and gas extraction site has been linked to reproductive harms and higher rates of cancer and asthma.

Environmental justice and public health groups also urged the state air and pollution regulator to accelerate clean transportation and a gas power plant phase out and transition to renewable energy



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and a safer grid, starting in low income communities of color. Specifically, accelerating targets for zero-emissions vehicles and vehicle miles traveled to put more clean cars and trucks on the road and strengthen our mass transit systems, and scaling up public investment in electric vehicles, mass transit, and home energy efficiency and electrification upgrade for low-income communities of color.

“For years, the state has prioritized subsidizing Teslas and solar for the wealthy, while working class communities of color are left with the highest costs and energy burdens. It’s time to prioritize investment in zero-emission, affordable transportation and energy for the low income and working class families that need it most,” **said Neena Mohan, Climate Justice Manager with the California Environmental Justice Alliance.** “By scaling up investments in mass transit, electric vehicle programs, and whole-building energy efficiency and electrification for low-income communities, CARB can create a climate blueprint that guides the state towards healthy neighborhoods, better transportation options, and a more stable climate.”

While millions of Californians already live on the frontlines of industrial pollution, the recently issued February update to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report warns that 3.6 billion people live in areas that are highly vulnerable to climate change and may be impacted by flooding, mortality due to extreme heat events, housing instability, disruption of food supply, and lack of drinking water access in coming years. The IPCC warns there is a small and rapidly closing window to stabilize our climate. If policymakers don’t act now to phase out fossil fuels, we will hit climate tipping points of 1.5°C and 2°C. In the words of the report, “delay means death.”

In their letter to the CARB Board, environmental justice groups laid out a pathway, sector-by-sector, to meet California’s climate goals through direct cuts to GHG emissions. By transitioning to a clean transportation system with 100% zero-emission vehicles (ZEV’s) by 2035; reducing total greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector to 30 MMT; prioritizing investments in zero-emissions, renewable technology; performing transformative and comprehensive whole-building energy efficiency upgrades; implementing a refinery phaseout by 2045; eliminating harmful pesticides and shifting to an agro-ecological model; California could cut up to 83% of its GHG emissions by 2045. The groups urged CARB to eliminate reliance on climate policy dead ends like cap and trade and carbon capture and sequestration.

“We can’t rely on California’s cap and trade program to produce real emissions reductions. Offsets and allowance banking are accounting gimmicks that enable big polluters to continue fueling climate disasters and concentrate even more pollution in working class communities of color while papering over their contributions to climate change,” **said Juan Flores, Community Organizer with the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment.** “Last month’s Independent Emissions Market Advisory Committee report showed that polluters have 321 million allowances banked - that means that under cap and trade, they don’t actually have to cut emissions between now and 2030. We



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need to prioritize actual cuts at the smokestack and achieve direct emissions reductions for our communities' health and wellbeing and to meet our climate targets.”

“CCUS will only further extend the life of otherwise defunct oil refineries, dirty gas-fired power plants, and other polluting industrial facilities. Oil companies are lobbying the state to pour billions into building carbon pipelines from places like Kern County, West Contra Costa, and South LA to carry carbon across the state and pump it underground in working class communities of color like the Delta, Shafter, Buttonwillow, and Bakersfield,” **said Martha Dina Arguello, Executive Director with Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles.** “CCUS would guarantee that already overburdened communities will continue to be health and safety sacrifice zones, and will only make the current climate crisis worse for all Californians.”

The environmental justice organizations will present their recommendations to the California Air Resources Board and staff members on March 10, 2022.

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