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Dr. Alberto Ayala

June 4, 2025

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Scott Wiener
Chair, Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
1020 N Street, Suite 520
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Steve Bennett
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4 on Climate Crisis, Resources,
Energy, and Transportation
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Benjamin Allen
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources,
Environmental Protection and Energy
1020 N Street, Suite 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: 2025-2026 State Budget Request for AB 617 Community Air Protection
Program**

Dear Budget Chairs:

On behalf of the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (Sac Metro Air District), the local agency responsible for advancing the greater capital region towards meeting all national ambient air quality standards, I strongly urge the Legislature to continue to provide sustained, robust funding for implementation of the AB 617 Community Air Protection Program and associated incentive funding in the 2025-2026 state budget. AB 617 (C. Garcia/E. Garcia, 2017) established a groundbreaking and transformative framework for California air districts to target and address community-level air pollution. **Sac Metro Air District recommends providing \$300 million for Incentives and \$60 million for Implementation (Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund) for Assembly Bill 617 Community Air Protection Program Funding.** The

future of community-driven air quality and public health improvements hinges on this critical investment.

Thanks to prior state funding, the Sac Metro Air District has made meaningful progress in reducing disparities in air quality through the AB 617 Community Air Protection Program. With this support, we have transformed and enabled structural changes in how the Sac Metro Air District engages with community members and agency partners, leading to more responsive decision-making. The program has empowered residents to better understand the impacts of air pollution, contribute local knowledge, and advocate for community-specific solutions. These efforts have deepened trust, improved public awareness, and built capacity within neighborhoods most affected by poor air quality. Through AB 617 and related efforts, the Sac Metro Air District has invested more than \$33 million in community collaboration, enforcement, exposure reduction, monitoring, intergovernmental alignment, and incentives. However, without continued state funding, program momentum will stall, and the progress the District and the South Sacramento-Florin community have fought to achieve over six years risks collapse.

Key Impacts and Ongoing Needs:

1. Strengthening Community Collaboration and Capacity:

AB 617 planning, development, and implementation have deepened Sac Metro Air District collaboration with local communities and advocacy groups. AB 617 state funding provides the necessary resources for the Sac Metro Air District to create and sustain partnerships with South Sacramento-Florin residents, businesses, community organizations, and advocacy groups. Through the AB 617 Steering Committee, composed of 35 diverse active and former members, we've built enduring trust and co-created solutions tailored to local priorities. These relationships are essential for implementing effective emissions reduction strategies and can only be preserved through consistent funding.

2. Expanding Air Monitoring and Access to Air Quality Information:

AB 617 funding has significantly expanded real-time air monitoring in Sacramento, delivering real-time, localized data to communities most impacted by pollution. Access to timely, accurate air quality information is critical to public health protection, especially in vulnerable neighborhoods. To maintain this critical infrastructure of sensors, data systems, and community engagement, continued funding is essential.

To maintain this critical infrastructure of sensors, data systems, and community engagement, continued funding is essential. Developed with the South Sacramento-Florin Steering Committee, the Sac Metro Air District's phased Community Air Monitoring Plan (CAMP) now guides the Community Emissions Reduction Program (CERP), ensuring actions are grounded in observed local conditions and community input. Sustained investment is vital to continuing and protecting these improvements and gains that translate into real public health benefits.

3. Reducing Exposure and Protecting Public Health:

AB 617 planning has directly inspired and resulted in programs and resources aimed at reducing air pollution exposure in vulnerable and burdened communities. Beyond air monitoring, exposure reduction is a core focus of the Sac Metro Air District's AB 617 efforts to protect Sacramento's most at-

risk populations. Under the Wildfire Smoke Emergency Plan (AB 661, McCarty, 2019) and in coordination with local public health, city and county agencies, businesses, and community partners, the Sac Metro Air District developed multilingual air quality action charts and outreach toolkits to guide schools, businesses, and the public in taking protective actions during wildfire smoke events.

The Sac Metro Air District also created a mobile source air toxics protocol to assess pollution risks near major roadways and rail lines and issued landscaping guidance to mitigate exposure through strategic design and vegetation. Additionally, the Sac Metro Air District routinely provides input on local development and transportation projects to support site-specific pollution reduction measures. These tools and actions are vital to reducing harmful exposures in the region's most impacted communities.

4. Incentive Clean Technology and Local Solutions:

Since 2018, the Sac Metro Air District has awarded an estimated \$34 million in Community Air Protection (CAP) incentives, directly supporting cleaner technologies in Sacramento's most pollution-burdened communities. Using a community-informed project selection process, these funds have helped replace heavy-duty trucks, school buses, off-road equipment, and other high-emission sources with cleaner alternatives such as electric vehicles and charging infrastructure.

About 90% of contracted funds have gone to SB 535 priority communities, delivering tangible air quality benefits where they are needed most. Projects awarded under these funds include clean truck replacements, lawn and garden equipment upgrades and electrification, and local infrastructure. **These investments have already cut an estimated 107 tons of Nitrogen Oxides (NOx), 10 tons of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), and 1 ton of diesel particulate matter (DPM).**

To reflect evolving community priorities that emerged during the AB 617 process, the Sac Metro Air District launched a supplemental environmental project program to invest in Clean Air Projects. Clean Air Projects use a portion of collected penalties from air quality violations to fund community-driven air quality initiatives within communities that benefit the most. One example is the District-funded project implemented by nonprofit 350 Sacramento, which held educational workshops and distributed Do-It-Yourself (DIY) air filters to approximately 600 low-income households to help address community-based solutions for relevant air quality issues.

However, the demand for both traditional and community-conceived projects continues to grow. Without sustained state funding, the Sac Metro Air District cannot continue to support innovative, locally tailored solutions that directly address residents' needs. Continued investment is essential to ensure access to cleaner technologies and expand support for grassroots, community-prioritized air quality improvements.

A Critical Juncture: From Planning to Action

The South Sacramento-Florin community is the final of 19 statewide communities to transition to a CERP community, having been recently designated in July 2024. While the Sac Metro Air District received a one-time allocation to develop the CERP, long-term success hinges on sustained collaboration with the South Sacramento-Florin Steering Committee, partner agencies, and the broader community.

Developing the CERP is only the beginning. Meaningful implementation will take place over at least five years and will require ongoing, dedicated funding to turn paper strategies into real and measurable air

quality improvements. Without continued state support, the hard-won progress, deep community engagement, and trust built over the past six years are at serious risk of being undone.

Continued investment is essential to preserve this momentum and ensure the full promise of the AB 617 program is realized for Sacramento's most impacted communities.

An Investment in Public Health and Accountability

AB 617's bottom-up, community-driven approach, centered on lived experience and supported by technical expertise, has proven effective in addressing long-standing air quality concerns. Continued state investment is essential to deliver on the program's promise, maintain momentum, and ensure that impacted communities see lasting, tangible improvements in air quality and public health.

Therefore, the Sac Metro Air District urgently calls on the Legislature to include in the state budget full implementation and incentive funding for the AB 617 program to continue reducing air pollution in communities. A commitment to continuous appropriations into the future will further ensure the promise of clean air for all communities, not just a select few, is fulfilled.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to protect California's communities.

Sincerely,



Alberto Ayala, PhD, MSE
Executive Director and Air Pollution Control Officer

cc:

Angelique Ashby, California State Senate, District 8
Maggy Krell, California State Assembly, District 6
Stephanie Nguyen, California State Assembly, District 10
The Honorable Mike McGuire, President Pro Tempore, California State Senate
The Honorable Robert Rivas, Speaker of the California State Assembly
Members, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources, Environmental Protection and Energy
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4 on Climate Crisis, Resources, Energy, and Transportation
Yana Garcia, Secretary for Environmental Protection
Liane M. Randolph, Chair, California Air Resources Board
Grant Mack, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Newsom
Lauren Sanchez, Senior Advisor for Climate, Office of Governor Newsom
Joe Stephenshaw, Director, Department of Finance
Matt Almy, Program Budget Manager, Natural Resources, Environment and Capital Outlay

