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December 16, 2021

Uduak-Joe Ntuk  
State Oil and Gas Supervisor  
California Geologic Energy Management Division  
Department of Conservation  
715 P St, MS 1900  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Draft Rule for Protection of Communities and Workers from Health and Safety Impacts from Oil and Gas Production Operations

Dear Supervisor Ntuk:

The recently released Draft Rule for Protection of Communities and Workers from Health and Safety Impacts from Oil and Gas Production Operations developed by the California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) does not go far enough to protect frontline communities. I strongly urge CalGEM to consider the health and safety of our frontline communities by enhancing the Draft Rule to include existing wells in the 3,200-foot set-back zone. Additionally, CalGEM should end all permitting for fossil fuel extraction within the 3,200-foot setback zone until the rule goes into effect.

While the Draft Rule would prevent drilling of new oil and gas production sites within 3,200 feet of homes, schools, health centers, and other sensitive sites within California, it falls short of protecting frontline communities who presently live, study, and work near existing fossil fuel wells. Nearly seven million Californians—mostly people of color—live within one mile of an oil or gas well. This is a reality my constituents live with every day, where we have urban oil drilling taking place within 3,200 feet of homes, schools, and businesses. Studies link proximity to oil and gas wells to increased risk of asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

It's no accident that my district has some of the highest asthma rates in the country. Low-income communities and communities of color who live with existing gas and oil wells in their neighborhoods will continue to experience a shorter life expectancy and worse health outcomes unless CalGEM revises the Draft Rule to include existing wells in the establishment of the 3,200-foot setback zone between wells and sensitive receptors.

In Wilmington, California, located in my Congressional District, oil wells can be found between homes, behind baseball fields, in the parking lots of churches and stores, and directly next to the local Boys & Girls Club site. The population of Wilmington is also 86 percent Latino. The environmental racism impacting Wilmington is tragically all too common throughout California, where oil and gas wells are predominately located within communities of color.

Furthermore, these disproportionately impacted communities are not only harmed by the health hazards of fossil fuel production, but also lack access to the health services needed to treat the medical conditions caused by prolonged exposure to pollutants from oil and gas extraction. In California, 84 percent of oil and gas wells are placed within medically underserved areas. This is no mistake, the oil industry has continuously sought to expand operations in disadvantaged, vulnerable communities.

As the Representative of California's 44<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, a district that includes existing urban oil wells in frontline communities, I strongly urge CalGEM to consider the health and safety of our communities by revising the Draft Rule to establish a 3,200-foot setback distance between all new and existing oil and gas extraction sites, and to end all permitting for fossil fuel extraction within the 3,200-foot setback zone until the rule goes into effect.

Sincerely,



Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress