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Chair Liane M. Randolph
Members of the Board
California Air Resources Board
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95812

Support: AB 627 Selection of East Oakland as a Priority Community for Community Emission Reduction Planning

January 31, 2022

Dear Chair Randolph and Members of the Board,

On behalf of the Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment, I write to express our strong support for the selection of East Oakland as a priority community to develop a Community Emission Reduction Plan under Assembly Bill 617.

For more than a decade, the Rose Foundation's New Voices Are Rising program has worked with high school and college age youth who live in East Oakland and/or attend school in East Oakland. Over the years, many of our students have dealt with recurring asthma flare-ups, or have watched family members or friends deal with them. In that time, our East Oakland students have consistently expressed deep concern about the health impacts of air pollution in their community.

Our East Oakland students' concerns about poor air have grown over the past few years, when wildfire smoke has added to the ongoing pollution burdens they experience: from industrial sources like the AB & I Foundry and Nautilus Society Crematorium; from the nearby airport; from heavy truck traffic on the 880 freeway and on truck routes that run through the neighborhoods; and from freight trains paralleling the freeway that carry goods from all over the country. The COVID 19 pandemic has only added more reasons to be concerned. East Oakland has been hit particularly hard by the pandemic; the 28-day average test positivity rate for the East Oakland 94621 zip code currently exceeds 30% - considerably higher than the 22.5% 7-day average statewide positivity rate at the most recent peak.

The intense fire seasons of the past several years, and the choking smoke that has blanketed their community have also ramped up the level of concern that our students express about climate change. They are committed to finding ways to protect their community from damage from heatwaves, power disruptions, and smoke events while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving local air quality. Their commitment needs to be reflected in a truly community-driven emission reduction plan as well.

East Oakland needs a community-driven emission reduction plan that will make it possible for East Oakland residents, including East Oakland youth, to chart a path to healthy air and a livable future. We strongly endorse the Bay Area Air Quality Management District's nomination of East Oakland to be among the next round of California communities to develop a Community Emission Reduction Plan.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill Ratner", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jill Ratner
Board President and Senior Program Adviser
Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment.
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