**Public Comment of Mary Valdemar, AB617 Steering Committee**

Representing San Bernardino & Muscoy Communities

San Bernardino Valley College and Chicano Indigenous service cooperative (ChICCCAA)

First Slide: I would like to start today with an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement as was requested by our community members since the beginning of this process. The purpose of this is to center the original people, caretakers, protectors and defenders of these territories within our home of San Bernardino including the Yuhaviatam and Serrano peoples, more commonly known as the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. I would also like to acknowledge the Gabrielino-Tongva people of Wilmington, Carson and West Long Beach. I believe the Los Angeles, Boyle Heights, West Commerce community has also acknowledged their Indigenous communities. I want to be clear that we are asking all agencies and organizations to implement the practice of Indigenous Land Acknowledgements in all public forums especially regarding EJ issues. This practice is not a box to check as a formality but a call to show respect, honor and acknowledge the people who filled this role for hundreds, maybe thousands of years. It is also an acknowledgement that the “current ways” of those who are charged with protecting the air, water and ultimately the earth have not been working too well for many of us. To correct this, we must express gratitude to those who came before us and recognize their work, as we also humbly ask for permission to do our part to get back to a more balanced, holistic way of living here on Mother Earth.

Next Slide: I would like to start my comments with these two images from 2017 – 2020 from two news articles concerning our region in San Bernardino. You have heard and will continue to hear a lot of technical data, graphs, analysis and jargon which to be honest is not very friendly or relatable to the communities facing the most challenges & direct impacts. I would like to really give a broad overview of our work and struggles over the last year within AB 617.

The first image from 2017 is from KVCR which is a public radio and television station at San Bernardino Valley College. The article highlights a list of the most polluted areas in our region, which of course include San Bernardino and Muscoy along with the LA communities already mentioned. The image shows a crowded city view of LA with obviously polluted smoggy air, invoking images of traffic filled freeways, trucks and industry polluters all contributing to poor health outcomes for the most disadvantaged communities.

The second image from 2020 is from the SB Sun newspaper, an article from earlier this year that highlights a 600,000 sq ft warehouse development near the San Bernardino airport over a span of 20 acres. This project is just outside the AB617 boundaries and shows an image with blue skies, white fluffy clouds, green landscapes and crisp clean looking environmentally friendly facilities.

One of these images is telling the truth.

One of these images is a clever marketing scheme and facade to evade accountability for the true impacts on our community which will mean hundreds, or thousands of trucks adding to our already overburdened neighborhoods.

Ironically the CARB website for this very meeting uses a similar image with blue skies and happy little clouds that doesn’t look anything at all like the air we experience in our real life communities. We don’t want to entertain any more lies about our situation or how we got here. We are here now in AB617 to tell the truth as the community see’s it, feels it and lives it everyday. That is the intent! So let’s talk about the truth…

* The truth is people are dying in our community daily and we are watching the sick struggle with a pandemic on top of already deadly air quality. The fear of these two threats combined is real.
* The truth is these meetings, these plans and this proposal includes many things that could have been done all along, before AB617 and before we were forced to take public meetings to a more accessible format because of the pandemic and social distancing mandates.
* The truth is that as we speak right now, about “reductions, emissions and pollution” there are people planning to bring more and more factories, warehouses, trucks, refineries and polluters to our communities which makes our work to reduce emissions at this pace pointless.
* The truth is that the work we are doing is being undermined by bad players, other agencies, developers, poor planners, uninformed local leaders within cities and neighborhoods around our boundaries not just in San Bernardino but in all three AB617 communities.

Please don’t waste our time, our efforts and our energy by settling for a mediocre plan that lacks courage and clear consequences for the bad players that so many others have mentioned. We need you to help us prove that the community can collectively come up with the solutions that are needed. It was mentioned to do this in partnership but it needs to be with those partners who are willing to really change, to innovate, to acknowledge where we went wrong in the past and make difficult challenging steps to correct it immediately and with urgency. This is the spirit of the partnership we need with agencies, businesses, local leaders and all stakeholders. This is the lens that we must look through as we evaluate the CERP and our roles within AB617.

Next slide:

I also want to acknowledge that we have made some progress but it is also very important that we clearly recognize there is still much work to do to get the outcomes that we want for our community.

Progress We Have Made:

1. **WE got AB617 Off the Ground in Year #1** – this was done with very little existing infrastructure or previous models for the first year communities and required thinking outside of the normal structures, systems and ways of doing business for many of us.
2. **Embraced Progressive Stack & Inclusion** – for our community we implemented tactics to improve inclusion of folks previously left out of decision making and made their voices a priority.
3. **Built Scaffolding & Skeleton** – the CERP as it exists is the frame, the scaffold and the skeleton that we now need to build on. If it is fragile, weak or not well put together it will not stand the test of time nor accomplish what we need in five, ten or twenty years from now. It needs to be strong, designed to last and have enough flexibility to change with the needs of our community.
4. **Community First, Centered & Lifted** – the centering of regular community voices, over politicians, academics, government agencies and other folks with fancy titles was an accomplishment in this process and a good start to encouraging community to take up space.

Work Still To Do:

1. **More Authentic Community Feedback & Less “Homework”** – collective hands on methods are more productive than filling out surveys, data sheets or completing feedback forms later. The time and energy in the meetings should be focused on giving expert community observations and direction to the agencies to research later not the other way around.
2. **More Inter-Agency Cooperation & Training for DM’s** – good work was done to improve the collaboration & communication between AQMD & CARB but more needs to be done amongst multiple agencies and government entities to streamline and improve accountability.
3. **Better Data on Local Air Related Health Impacts** – attention to the health impacts is still not being addressed sufficiently within AB617 and there is a need for collaboration on local data with health agencies, advocates, school health officers and researchers.
4. **Accessible Monitors & Air Filters for ALL** – the divide between those with access to air monitors and air filters especially for areas near polluting sources is too deep mostly due to income and access issues. Urgent mitigation needs to be a priority while we create better regulations and reduce emissions. Incentives are ineffective to resolve this for communities in poverty.
5. **Labor Friendly Solutions that Build Up Green Infrastructure** – our region can no longer be dependent on logistics and fossil fuel related industry. We need investment in zero emission technology industry here in the IE as an alternative to logistics with union protections in place.
6. **TEETH = Track, Enhance Enforcement & Technology & Hurry!** – the most common critique I hear is that the plan lacks “teeth” related to enhanced regulations. We need a template of what that actually means to real communities. It should include improved tracking of bad players, polluters and others decision makers lacking accountability to clean up our air, and we also need enhanced enforcement of existing regulations as we attempt to create new regulations to protect our hardest hit communities. We also need continued innovation of technology especially a regional collective push for zero emission solutions in manufacturing, production and logistics industry and finally we need all of these done in a hurry, with the urgency it truly deserves fully understanding the lives at stake if we do not give this plan TEETH!