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3 Witness: Raul Lopez
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7 **STATE OF CALIFORNIA**
8 **CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION**
9

10 IN THE MATTER OF:

DOCKET NO. 15-AFC-01

11
12 APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION OF
13 THE **PUENTE POWER PROJECT**

**TESTIMONY OF RAUL LOPEZ ON
BEHALF OF THE CALIFORNIA
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
ALLIANCE**

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Justice Alliance (CEJA)

1 My name is Raul Lopez, and I live at 413 Simon Way, Oxnard CA. I have lived in
2 Oxnard my whole life. I lived at this address until I was 19. When I had children, I moved back
3 to this home because I wanted to raise my family here. I have three children – eight, seven and
4 two years old.

5 We are a very beach-going family. I've always gone to the beach. I used to go to the
6 beaches in Oxnard. I didn't know anything about pollution from power plants or other sources,
7 and nobody told me anything. I was sick my whole childhood life. I had a chronic digestive
8 problem from when I was seven until about sophomore year of high school. My parents took me
9 to many different doctors, and they were unable to diagnose the problem. I don't know whether it
10 was related to pollution exposure from the beach, or from other pollution, or whether it was
11 unrelated, but I want to be healthy and keep my family health. Although I've always wanted to
12 have a family tradition of loving the beach in our city, I take my family to the beach in Ventura,
13 where there aren't smokestacks on the beach. I would love to go to the beach in Oxnard. When
14 they clean up the beach I would definitely want to go there. Now, I don't want to take my family
15 there because of the fear of what we would be inhaling.

16 In addition to my own health history, I have a specific reason not to take my family to the
17 beach where the power plants are operating. One of my children, my daughter who is now seven,
18 was diagnosed with asthma very early in her life. She needed a nebulizer as a baby, then as a
19 toddler she was given an inhaler, which she used twice a week. She attended preschool and
20 Head Start here in Oxnard. When we started her in kindergarten we sent her to school in
21 Ventura. My wife and I noticed that she didn't need the inhaler nearly as much. She's in second
22 grade now. For the past three years she hasn't needed her inhaler, and after the first year we
23 stopped even keeping it at school.

24 I have significant concerns about pollution in Oxnard. There are pesticides from the
25 fields, and whatever is coming out of the stacks from the power plants. I started working with my
26 parents in the strawberry fields beginning when I was twelve. We all breathed the pesticides
27 from the fields and the pollution from the stacks.

28

1 The people who live and work in Oxnard are trying to change the way decisions are made
2 about our community by becoming active in addressing pollution threats. There was a whole
3 generation of youth whose parents kept their heads down and worked, dealing with any problems
4 in the family. These were parents who were afraid of government officials and employers. Now
5 their children have the tools and information to back it up and are speaking up. I started
6 volunteering doing community work when I was 13. I started raising awareness, spreading the
7 word myself, organizing with farmworkers. I organized in South Winds, a block away from the
8 Edison stacks at Ormond Beach. I was organizing around what the residents saw as needs –
9 community revitalization, community gardens. There were kids living there who had never been
10 to the beach! It struck me that these were all poor people and people of color. They find it
11 difficult to reach up to decisionmakers. Wealthier white people are able to lobby decisionmakers
12 or hire people to lobby for them, but poor people who live with the decisions don't have the
13 luxury of lobbyists.

14 If NRG wants to propose another new plant in our community, I believe decisionmakers
15 should listen to what the community says. Community members have come to the Energy
16 Commission workshops for the last two years, each person getting three minutes, or less, to say
17 what they think should become of their beach. The message conveyed by the poor people and
18 people of color, along with white and affluent allies, was that if there is a need for a new gas-
19 fired power plant, decisionmakers should be looking to communities that do not already have
20 three power plants on their beaches. They should look to wealthy communities where people
21 have the resources to address pollution and other social issues that go along with a power plant,
22 and where there aren't already many burdens like poverty and joblessness and different sources
23 of pollution.

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25 DATED: January 17, 2017

By:

/s/

Raul Lopez