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An Equitable Transition to Electric Vehicles Requires Reliable Chargers

October 25, 2023

Docket No: 22-EVI-04

California Energy Commission 715 P Street Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Comments on Draft Staff Regulations for Improved Inventory, Utilization, and Reliability Reporting

On a brutally hot day in Los Angeles I pulled into a grocery store parking lot to use a DC fast charging station. I had just driven from San Francisco and I was down to 30 miles in my Hyundai Ioniq 5 electric vehicle (EV.) I tried earlier during my drive to charge at a station, but four out of the six kiosks were not functioning and the two that were working were taken. So I decided to risk arriving with only 10% of my battery left.

I joined two other EV drivers trying to charge, both of whom were on the phone with customer service. My heart sank because after several attempts the charge would not initiate. I suddenly remembered my hotel had an EV charger so I was able to leave. The other two people on the phone were not so lucky. They remained in the 95 degree heat trying to get a charge to initiate through customer service. All three chargers in that parking lot station were not functional.

I wonder how many of you who are working on these regulations have an electric vehicle? Furthermore, how many of you are renters without a charger at home who have had the frustrating experience of relying on public chargers? I met a mother frantically trying to get a charger to work before she picked up her children from school. Plugging and unplugging as directed, trying to use an app when the credit card reader failed, and finally giving up. "Maybe these electric vehicles aren't such a great idea," she said to me.

My husband recently drove our Bolt from San Francisco to an important party where his band was set to play in Paso Robles. His first attempt was at a large mall where he had trouble locating the chargers because there were no signs. He gave up and went to a station further down the highway. When he got there one man was on the phone with customer service because his charger would not work. My husband then began a desperate attempt to initiate a charge because at this point he knew if it didn't work he was going to be late. The credit card reader wouldn't acknowledge his Visa card. He unplugged and replugged to try the app, but no luck. He called me and said in a furious tone, "I would say no one should get an electric vehicle." I told him to go to a different machine and try again. He had to make several attempts, but he finally got a charge to

initiate.

My husband and I are fortunate enough to have a home and the financial means to install a home charger, but what about people who don't have access to a home charger? My son who rents would like to get an electric vehicle and he could get a great deal on a used Bolt, but he's going with a plug-in hybrid. I could not in all sincerity tell him he should go all electric because he won't have access to a home charger. He will be depending on a public charging system that that I know often doesn't work.

You can define uptime, you can mandate charging companies report data, but neither ensures the consumer will have a charger that works. What could work is requiring 3-5% of our taxpayer dollars funding these chargers go into an escrow account to be used solely for maintenance. Another important option you have is to withhold final payment until the company proves its chargers are reliable. Money going to private companies should not be given unconditionally. Reliability should be the mandated outcome of all of this money being paid to companies that so far have not delivered.

California has mandated all cars sold by 2035 must be electric vehicles. We are not going to get there without the California Energy Commission getting tougher on these companies. They are not delivering and it will fall on lower income communities without access to home chargers to bear the burden of this dysfunctional charging infrastructure. It is one thing to talk about the desire to have an equitable transition to electric vehicles, but talk is cheap. If you really want every Californian to have the ability to go electric then you need to do more than these current regulations. They will do little to address the current state of public charging in California.

Thank you for your consideration,

Susannah Saunders
Electric Vehicle Advocate