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Eliminate Fossil Gas Connections & Mandate All-Electric in the 2022 Building Code

I am a Woolsey Wildfire survivor, because the average temperature has already increased 2.6 degrees Celsius (4.7 degrees Fahrenheit) in Ventura County where I live, making mine the FASTEST WARMING COUNTY IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES. A comprehensive May 2020 report authored by the International Energy Agency, a traditionally conservative, fossil fuel-focused, global energy policy body, warns that the world MUST STOP new fossil fuel investment THIS YEAR to limit global temperature rise to the critical, not-to-be-exceeded 1.5 degrees Celsius limit. IEA further explained that doing so result in tremendous benefits by creating 30 million new jobs, preventing 2.5 million deaths every year, and ADDING 0.4% to annual, global GDP growth.

CEC's 2022 draft building code FAILS to protect California's climate, health and economy by INCREASING fossil gas infrastructure investment. By allowing the continued incorporation of obsolete fossil fuel infrastructure, just as California is mandating significantly increased housing construction statewide, CEC ensures millions more homes will be saddled with stranded assets and costly retrofits. Californians already face escalating extreme heat; we can expect a long list of costly crises including another mega-drought, shrinking water supplies, intensifying wildfire risk, worsening air quality, more respiratory illness, health and crop damaging pests, reduced chill hours for fruit and nut trees, lower farm and livestock yields, diminished wine-grape quality, and increasing demands on an already strained grid.

Fossil gas-powered buildings alone contributed over a QUARTER of California's Global Heating emissions in 2016; and, as the IEA has announced, there's NO reasonable path to meeting our climate goals while continuing to burn gas in our buildings because pound for pound, the methane composing fossil gas is 84 times MORE POTENT as a greenhouse gas than carbon. California MUST rapidly phase out this toxic power source in favor of 100% clean, renewable energy.

CEC must heed the advice of the C.A.R.B and the Bay Area A.Q.M.D. NOW and shift its rhetorical climate leadership into real action by REPLACING fossil gas connections with ALL_ELECTRIC connection requirements in the 2022 building code cycle.

Given your positions at the CEC, you must know that the most significant, unspoken environmental justice issue in our state is hiding in plain sight. Turning on our kitchen ranges, furnaces, water heaters and dryers, and burning fossil gas creates dangerous levels of health-destroying pollutants (including nitrogen dioxide, formaldehyde, carbon monoxide and particulate matter) INSIDE California homes that would be illegal OUTdoors. Children of families with gas stoves are 42% more likely to experience asthma symptoms; and like the injustices of most forms of pollution, the most vulnerable kids, especially minority children residing in smaller, crowded living spaces without effective range hoods have the most exposure, with the most debilitating health impacts.

I am also the parent of a daughter who loves to run. What began as an expression of joy became her passion. She wasn't graced with a runner's body; so to compensate, she trained harder than teammates who were. When I picked her up after practice, I always found her running extra laps around the track. Elected Captain of her high school cross country team, as a Junior, and again as a Senior, she dreamed of leading her girls' varsity team to a state championship. But like increasing numbers of children and youth in California, and across America, she also suffers with asthma. We were unaware of her condition until she collapsed while competing in a race. I watched helplessly as panic overtook my child's face, as she struggled to breathe and could not.

Initially, her respiratory distress came sporadically; more interrupted races, and terrifying moments gasping for air in rush-hour traffic on a hot day with the car windows down. Eventually we learned that her attacks were triggered by oil and gas emissions including indoor air pollution from my "natural" gas cooktop.

We've ALL been LIED to. Like the tobacco industry, the "natural" gas industry is waging a propaganda campaign against American families, to protect their own interests and profits. The magazine ads, television spots, and social media posts are clever marketing; but they're not any more real than the girls in hard hats on the "Women for Natural Gas" website. Despite my training as a biologist, I didn't realize that the gas stove I favored for cooking my family's meals could damage my children's lungs; I learned TOO LATE the risks of cooking and heating with fossil gas. My family's affluence provided me with knowledge and choices the vast majority of Californians don't have, and even those advantages didn't protect my child; but YOU CAN protect generations of California children from suffering her fate. And you must do so ... because with great power comes great responsibility.

The single-most effective strategy CEC can take to slash climate-destabilizing emissions, protect our children's health, reduce construction and utility costs (to actually enable the otherwise elusive affordable housing our state so desperately needs), increase building safety, and preserve our state's economic vitality is to require all new construction be built ALL-ELECTRIC NOW and STOP installing fossil gas in any new buildings.

CEC must revise the 2022 Title 24 building code standards to eliminate gas connections and require mandatory all-electric homes and buildings. California's children, climate, and economy CAN'T AFFORD to WAIT three more years.