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California Energy Commission Committee Workshop
Nuclear Power Plant Issues
Harry Wang, MD, President
Physicians for Social Responsibility/Sacramento
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Honorable Chair and Commissioners, my name is Dr. Harry Wang. I am president of the Sacramento chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) and also speak for the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles chapters of PSR and for the national office of PSR.

In 2005, my wife and I went to Japan and visited my wife's relatives in the Fukushima prefecture about 60 miles from the Daiichi nuclear power plant. Following the 9.0 magnitude earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant disaster, we were relieved to find out that our relatives and friends in Japan are safe. The country was devastated, however, the triple disaster. Having lost over 200,000 civilians from two atomic bombs, the country was especially re-traumatized by the nuclear plant meltdown and radioactive releases which may take decades to clean up. Japan now faces considerable uncertainty about their health, economic, and energy futures.

Following the disaster in Japan, California chapters of Physicians for Social Responsibility received many calls from individuals concerned about the safety of California's nuclear reactors. Could a similar disaster occur here? What would be the health effects of a nuclear accident or meltdown?

PSR supports comments submitted by Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility. The need for updated seismic analysis is critical to determine the safety, health, and economic risks for our State.

Disposal of radioactive waste remains an acute and long-term public health issue. The wisdom and safety of nuclear power will remain in question because of this. Until other sources of energy are fully utilized, PSR joins over 170 national and local organizations from all 50 states in recommending that spent fuel be moved from pools to hardened on-site storage and that spent fuel pools need to be physically protected.¹

In light of Fukushima, reading from a recent PSR statement²: *“the effects of long-term exposure on large populations are unknown and it will be many years before the incidents of cancer and other health effects emerge. Rigorous epidemiological studies of workers at the site and populations both in Fukushima and throughout Japan must be started now and continued for decades.*

The amount of radiation that has been released from Fukushima – recently doubled from the original estimates – and the amount that will continue to be released is largely unknown. It is the consensus of the medical and scientific community, summarized in the US National Academies’ National Research Council report Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation VII (BEIR VII report), that there is no “safe” level of radiation. Any exposure...creates an increased risk of cancer. Moreover, children are much more vulnerable than adults to the effects of radiation, and fetuses are even more vulnerable.”

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

¹ <http://www.psr.org/nuclear-bailout/resources/principles-for-safeguarding.pdf>

² http://www.psr.org/news-events/press-releases/psr-statement-on-the-nuclear.html#_ftn2