



October 19, 2023

The Honorable Mike A. Gipson, Chair
California State Assembly
Assembly Select Committee on Ports and Goods Movement
1021 O Street, Suite 8110
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Health Group on the Health Effects from Pollution in California Ports

Dear Chair Gipson and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the undersigned health organizations, we write to comment on the Assembly Select Committee on Ports and Goods Movement's hearings on California ports first hosted on September 28, 2023, and another scheduled for November 2, 2023. The goods movement sector is a major source of air and climate pollution that threatens the health of all Californians, especially port-side communities. Diesel trucks, fossil-fueled ships, and cargo-handling equipment represent major sources of pollution at the ports, which can cause an array of negative health outcomes. We urge the Committee and the legislature to extensively consider the health impacts of ports pollution at the upcoming hearing and continue to support the transition zero-emission (ZE) technologies and investments in zero emission vehicles (ZEV) and infrastructure.

Over 90 percent of Californians live in an area with unhealthy air. According to the 2023 "[State of the Air](#)" report, California is home to six of the top ten cities with the worst ozone in the nation, and eight of the ten most impacted by particle pollution.¹ Unhealthy air can cause respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, such as asthma onset in children and adults, asthma attacks, heart attacks, strokes, and premature death. In addition, port equipment emits diesel particulate matter, which California has labeled as a toxic air contaminant that can increase cancer risk.² Poor air quality can affect everyone, especially children, seniors, and those with pre-existing conditions. We also know communities of color and low-income communities have been disproportionately impacted by pollution, and that port-side communities throughout California bear a tremendous level of this burden given their close proximity to a range of pollution sources.

Recent policies approved by the California Air Resources Board highlight the immense challenges posed by harmful pollution at California's dozen ports. For example, new standards for harbor craft (*e.g.*, ferries, tugboats, fishing vessels) will ensure a clean-up of this sector over the coming years. The health benefits of doing so include an estimated \$5.3 billion in public health benefits, saving hundreds of lives

¹ [State of the Air | American Lung Association](#)

² [Summary: Diesel Particulate Matter Health Impacts | California Air Resources Board](#)

and reducing cancer risk for approximately 15 million Californians closest to working harbors. New standards for drayage trucks (i.e., the Advanced Clean Fleet (ACF) standard), ocean-going vessels at-berth, and other programs to accelerate zero-emission operations will similarly save lives and reduce health emergencies caused by goods movement in California's port communities. Still, these improvements are not sufficient to address port pollution and related health concerns; additional efforts are necessary to shift the broader suite of port equipment away from combustion and to zero-emissions.

To further reduce emissions and improve public health from port pollution, the legislature must recognize the outsized health damages caused by port operations and continue to support ZE regulations and ambitious investments. Below are recommendations to reduce emissions, improve air quality, and ensure healthy equity:

- Ensure that we meet ZEV standards outlined on ACF and Advanced Clean Trucks as planned to clean up drayage and other port-related trucking operations.
- Require ports to deploy 100 percent ZE cargo handling equipment by 2030.
- Continue to provide targeted incentives to spur the transition to zero-emission equipment and infrastructure in parallel with stronger standards.

The state's implementation of ZEV standards and ZE equipment, including in all California port complexes, will result in public health benefits, lives saved, reductions in cancer risk, and a lower burden of asthma. Such benefits are especially crucial for lower-income communities and communities of color adjacent to ports, which are exposed to disproportionate pollution burdens. Furthering ZEV policies and investments ensures health equity for the communities that need it the most.

We hope to continue conversations about the health impacts of port pollution and steps the legislature can take to reduce air and climate pollution. Please contact us with any questions or for more information.

Sincerely,

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