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CHAIR, BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE # 5
ON PUBLIC SAFETY

February 04, 2022

South Coast Air Quality Management District
C/O Governing Board Chair Ben Benoit, Vice Chair Vanessa Delgado and Members
21865 Copley Drive
Diamond Bar, CA 91765

RE: Rendering Plant Odor Affecting Southeast Los Angeles Communities

Dear Governing Board Chair Benoit, Vice Chair Delgado and Members:

I am writing to follow-up on a letter signed by forty Southeast Los Angeles elected officials, including local environmental justice organizations and myself, urging the South Coast Air Quality Management District to strengthen and clarify Rule 415 related to Odors from Rendering Plants.

When I was a teacher in the city of Huntington Park, I dealt with smells from rendering plants in my classroom. The smell is so strong, putrid, and nauseating that my students could not focus and now, twenty years later, it is insulting that we are still dealing with the same problem.

For decades, our Southeast Los Angeles communities have voiced concerns about harmful and bothersome odors wafting into homes, classrooms, and businesses from local rendering facilities. These harsh odors are a daily occurrence for our communities, some of the most densely populated, multicultural and under-resourced communities in the District we represent.

As mentioned in a previous letter, Rule 415 is vague about accountability, does not specify consequences for rendering plants that do not meet requirements under this rule, and requires several hours per day from individuals looking to report odor nuisances. Our communities are already overcoming several institutional barriers and difficulties that reporting air quality concerns should not further disenfranchise environmental justice communities like those in Southeast Los Angeles.

I am supportive of communities asking to strengthen and clarify Rule 415 and I respectfully ask the AQMD Governing Board to do the following three things:

- 1. Make it easy for the public to report and confirm violations of Rule 415.**

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The current rule which requires three reports in an hour to dispatch an investigator and six confirmed reports to issue a fine is onerous. This high bar does not hold violators accountable or protect the public's health or quality of life. In fact, it is discouraging and allows unscrupulous violators to falsely imply or declare that these very real impacts are negligible or nonexistent.

2. Lower the bar for AQMD staff to issue violations.

In one recent incident, multiple people submitted a report and an investigator went out to investigate – after midnight. Presumably, people who reported the odor were asleep thus making it nearly impossible to meet the threshold of Rule 415.

3. Establish clear rules and specific consequences for violations of Rule 415.

The consequences should be clear, appropriate and progressively stronger to discourage repeat violations. A slap on the wrist will not discourage bad behavior or negligent operators as shown by the decades this problem has continued unabated.

I respectfully ask that the Board consider taking appropriate action on these straightforward requests to protect public health and quality of life for people in our community. Please make it easier to report and confirm violations; make it easier for AQMD staff to issue notices for violations; and ensure that the consequences for rule violations are clear, appropriate, and effective in deterring future violations.

If you have any questions please reach out to my Environmental Deputy Evelyn Nuno at (562) 861-5803.

Sincerely,

CRISTINA GARCIA
CHAIR, LEGISLATIVE WOMEN'S CAUCUS
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, 58TH DISTRICT