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Opening Message of Assemblymember Cristina Garcia

Good Morning. First, I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to share this message and to the California Air Resources Board staff for your diligent efforts to put this workshop together. I also want to thank all those who have made time in your schedules to attend this webinar. We are all readjusting our schedules, our routines and our lives in the face of the COVID 19 crisis and its unprecedented impacts. For some the impacts are mere inconveniences while for others it is a matter of life and death. It is well known that poverty and pollution results in major health disparities including shorter life expectancy as well as higher rates of cancer, birth defects, infant mortality, asthma, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. This disparity has become more apparent during the current pandemic where impacts are most severe- even deadly in communities that have higher exposure to air pollution, communities that are near "air toxic hot spots."

The COVID 19 crisis highlights the critical need to collect emissions data, identify facilities having localized impacts, assess the health risks and inform affected communities. The LA County Dept. of Public Health reports those who live in lower-income communities in L.A. County are three times more likely to die from COVID-19 and that overall black people continue to see the highest COVID-19 death rates in L.A. County, followed by Latino and Asian people. Yet this is not unique to LA County. Similar patterns are seen in many low-income and predominantly black and latino communities throughout the state and across the country - from Cancer Alley in Louisiana and Rubbertown, Kentucky to Cuyahoga County Ohio and the Bronx, New York. This trend highlights the urgent need for taking effective action to reduce significant health risks to the most vulnerable communities which are mostly low-income, black and brown communities

AB 617 is a key component in ARB's comprehensive air toxics program and as the author of this bill, I continue to work towards creating better solutions for cleaner communities. It is my hope that this workshop will also help identify solutions for cleaner communities because now more than ever it is needed. Thank you.

CRISTINA GARCIA
Assemblymember, 58th District
Chair, Joint Legislative Committee
On Climate Change Policies