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Wilmington
Chamber of Commerce

April 5, 2021

The Honorable Lena Gonzalez
State Senate, District 33
State Capitol, Room 2068
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 342 (Gonzales) – SCAQMD: Board Membership – OPPOSE

Dear Senator Gonzalez,

On behalf of Los Angeles County Business Federation (BizFed), an association of over 200 business organizations representing over 450,000 employers in LA County, and the organizations signing onto this letter, we take an oppose position to Senate Bill 342. Your legislation that would expand the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) Governing Board from 13 to 15 members by adding two board members from the Environmental Justice (EJ) community is unnecessary and diminishes local control and accountability.

In 2016, we opposed SB 1387 (De Leon), which also attempted to expand the SCAQMD Governing Board with additional Sacramento-based unelected appointments (then it was three additional board seats, now it would be two). Now, we oppose SB 342 for the following reasons:

Weakens local control, sets a dangerous precedent and takes regional authority away from local elected officials who are accountable to their constituents. SB 342 would authorize State elected officials to change the current SCAQMD board composition by adding two additional Sacramento appointee members. Doing so would give state-appointed non-elected representatives one-third of the seats on a regional board that is meant to represent local interests and is currently represented by city and county officials from four Southern California counties. The SCAQMD was established with local control in mind. The elected officials serving on the SCAQMD Board have a responsibility to their voters. This obligation will be weakened by adding more appointees who are not accountable to the public.

Attacks the competence of local leaders. By adding board seats, SB 342 implies that elected officials serving on the SCAQMD board are not effectively setting local policies, something that the current 13-member board has done for almost 50 years. This proposed legislative change ignores the fact that local elected officials possess a unique knowledge of the region and the local environment. Local elected officials who serve on this board live in the South Coast air basin and understand the impact their public policy decisions have on their local communities.

All municipally elected SCAQMD Board members are selected through a transparent process via the city selection process. The board is made up of mayors, board of supervisors and city council members all elected by voters. Southern California has a diverse pool of elected officials eligible to represent the region on the SCAQMD Board under current law. The representatives

includes 20 county supervisors and 848 mayors and city council members. Transferring additional regional authority to additional State appointees undermines the role and effectiveness of the region.

SCAQMD already has an Environmental Justice Advisory Group with a board member functioning as chair. In 1990s, the Board established the Environmental Justice Advisory Group (EJAG), which serves as an advisory group to the SCAMD. The EJAG's mission is to advise and assist SCAQMD in protecting and improving public health of the District's most impacted communities. In 2009, EJAG membership increase from 20 members to 30 members. The SCAQMD ensures that the EJAG includes an ethnically and geographically diverse membership. Members serve four year terms. A SCAQMD Board member chairs this committee and attends the meetings.

The SCAQMD has a well-documented history of engaging the community on environmental justice-related issues and concerns. The last thing the SCAQMD needs is for Sacramento politicians to add two more appointed board seats to a 13-member Board, particularly individuals who would be unaccountable to local residents and business concerns and would dilute the influence of regional decision-makers.

For the reasons stated above, BizFed and the groups listed below opposed similar legislation in 2015 and we oppose SB 342 now.

We have always placed a great deal of value on your willingness to thoughtfully engage with BizFed and its member companies. Should you have any questions or need any further information about our opposition to SB 342, please contact Sarah Wiltfong at 310-213-8742 or sarah.wiltfong@bizfed.org.

Sincerely,

Building Owners & Managers Association - Los Angeles
California Chamber of Commerce
California Asphalt and Pavement Association
California Business Properties Association
California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
California Independent Petroleum Association
California Metals Coalition
California Small Business Alliance
Carson Dominguez Employers Alliance
Central Valley Energy Coalition
Construction Industry Air Quality Coalition
FuturePorts
Harbor Trucking Association
Inland Empire Economic Partnership
Kern Citizens for Energy
KernTax
Latin Business Association
Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles County Business Federation (BizFed)
Majestic Realty Co.
Orange County Business Council
Pacific Merchant Shipping Association
San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership
Valley Industry and Commerce Association
Wilmington Chamber of Commerce