July 8, 2015

California State Assembly

Committee on Natural Resources

Attn: Chair, Assembly Member Das Williams

 Vice-Chair Assembly Member Brian Dahle

Legislative Office Bldg.

1020 N St., Room 164

Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 350, In Support, If Amended

Dear Assembly Member Williams and Dahle,

350 Bay Area, with over 7500 members, is a climate activist organization working for deep reductions in carbon pollution in the nine SF Bay Area counties and beyond. 350 Bay Area supports SB 350 and feels encouraged that it moves our state forward in the right direction.  We are privileged to live in a state where the people, their elected representatives in the Legislature, and our Governor recognize the importance of having strong goals on climate change that lead us to a safer and healthier future.  However, we believe it is possible to make improvements to the bill as it currently reads, to make it even better, and we recognize how important it is to move faster.

The Global Carbon Project, an international research organization, reported last year that 2°C level of warming, seen as a threshold for serious climate disruption, is now likely to be reached within only three decades, emphasizing the urgency of cutting carbon emissions now. Stanford University professor Mark Jacobson has developed a plan to transition California to 100% renewable energy by 2050, which focuses on energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, and electrification. This work recommends an 80% renewable portfolio standard (RPS) by 2030 as a policy step and demonstrates that it is feasible with existing technology. Jacobson’s work also urges an 80% conversion of transportation to electricity by 2030, which would correspond to an equivalent reduction in petroleum use.

We believe the bill must include strong encouragement for distributed generation (DG), and we are glad to see language added requiring the benefits of DG to be taken into account.  It is important for utilities and Community Choice energy programs to use behind-the-meter DG, such as rooftop solar, to comply with the RPS. Opening up markets and policies to support DG will not only spur a strong move towards renewable electricity, but will also create local jobs, benefiting local economies and homeowners. It is important to make this transition in a just and equitable way for all Californians, while strengthening local communities.

**We feel strongly, however, that the language added in the Utilities & Commerce Committee, which encourages and incentivizes natural gas-powered vehicles as an option for reducing petroleum use [PUC 740.1.5 (a), (g), and (h)] should be removed.  While natural gas-powered vehicles may currently have shorter refueling times and equal or better driving range than their all-electric counterparts, electric vehicles will soon remove this benefit at current rates of technological improvement. When considering the full life cycle of natural gas, it is as bad for the climate as coal, which California is wise enough to be very rapidly moving away from.**

**Natural gas is not a clean fuel, it is not a bridge fuel; it is a fossil fuel, and it does not contribute toward greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. We need to leave as much of it as possible in the ground, not enshrine into state law its increased use going forward. Electrification is a far more effective solution for achieving both climate and public health improvements. Significant money spent now on natural gas vehicle infrastructure would take funds directly away from accelerating the electrification of transportation.  We strongly urge you to remove the language encouraging polluting fossil fuels in these clauses.**

Getting this bill right will enhance our reputation for leadership in renewable energy generation, efficiency, and storage, while creating even more healthy, good-paying, union jobs in California communities. Let’s show the world what we can do and not settle for half-measures. The future of the civilization as we know it is at risk.

Sincerely,

Ken Jones

350 Bay Area

Steering Committee