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 32

Dear Assembly Member Williams and Dahle,

350 Bay Area is a 7,500 member climate activist organization working for deep reductions in carbon pollution in the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties and beyond. We support SB32 (Pavley) California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006: emissions limit.

It is critical to elevate the goal of reducing emissions 80% below 1990 levels by 2050 as stated in Executive Order S-3-05, to State law. The world looks to California to continue setting the bar for comprehensive action to solve the climate crisis. Passage and implementation of these amendments to the Act will keep California in the forefront of climate leadership. While the 2050 emission reduction goal is based on the objective of keeping global temperature rise to 2°C, recent scientific findings suggest the climate is changing much faster than was predicted when this goal was first set. The Global Carbon Project reported last year that the 2°C level of warming, seen as a threshold for serious climate disruption, is likely to be reached within three decades if we continue our current trajectory. With the general lag in action at the international and national levels, it is clear that it falls to innovators like California to identify solutions and move very quickly.

In addition to supporting the emission reduction goal of SB 32, 350 Bay Area is also submitting proposed edits to SB 32 (attached) that would establish a commitment to improve public health in measures taken to solve the climate crisis.

The California Global Warming Solutions Act acknowledges threats to public health from climate change. It also mentions that solutions should include consideration of public health benefits and avoid negative health impacts. What the Act does not acknowledge, is the fact that the very same sources of climate warming air pollutants are also the sources of the overwhelming majority of other air pollutants that cause acute and chronic illness and early death. By far the major driver of both global warming and air pollution caused illness is combustion.

The sooner we end reliance on combustion for heat and power, the sooner we will not only solve the climate crisis, we will also solve our air pollution problems. Including a mandate for public health benefits, as opposed to just “consideration” of such benefits in the California Global Warming Solutions Act can make public health improvement a driver in the effort to decarbonize our energy sources, and achieve faster GHG reductions.

Scientists, technology leaders, and forward thinking policy makers understand that the best way to solve global warming is to reduce energy demand, decarbonize energy generation and electrify heat and power needs to the fullest extent possible. Decarbonization and electrification will also clean the air we breathe. Yet studies funded by California agencies showing how to achieve GHG reductions typically do not include quantification or comparison of public health impacts, costs and benefits in the scenarios considered. This is likely because the California Global Warming Solutions Act doesn't put public health costs and benefits on par with economic benefits and technical feasibility in its mandates.

We believe inclusion of public health improvement as a core implementation requirement of the California Global Warming Solutions Act will drive faster decarbonization. It will also achieve environmental justice much faster than after the fact fund dispersals from Cap and Trade. If public health is properly considered when solutions are contemplated in the first place, we will see reductions in both GHGs and other air pollutants in disproportionately impacted communities.

For true environmental equity, existing health costs from, and the benefits of cleaning up air pollution from combustion, must be considered as an integral part of economic costs and benefits and technical feasibility. Our proposed edits to SB 32 are submitted with this objective in mind.

It is important to make sure that the implementation mechanism for SB32 achieves real reductions in carbon emissions here in California, and protects low-income and disadvantaged communities. We appreciate the intention expressed with setting the goal of 80% reduction below 1990 levels in carbon emissions. We also strongly support getting to this goal sooner. Prioritizing pro active public health benefits in the California Global Warming Solutions Act will help us do that.

Sincerely,

350 Bay Area

Steering Committee