

Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Support for Establishment of 2,500-foot Health and Safety Setback Around Oil and Gas Extraction in Los Angeles

Dear Council President Wesson and Los Angeles City Council:

We respectfully express our support for an ordinance to establish a 2,500-foot setback separating oil and gas extraction operations from sensitive land uses such as homes, schools, and hospitals. We would also like to express gratitude to the City Council for the motion passed on June 30, 2017 (Council File # 17-0447) directing the City Attorney, Petroleum Administrator, and Department of Planning to perform a legal, land use, health, environmental, and economic study of such an ordinance. We applaud Council President Wesson for introducing this motion and Councilmembers Bonin, Cedillo, Harris-Dawson, Koretz, and Martinez for co-sponsoring the motion.

Los Angeles contains the largest and most densely populated urban oil field in the nation. There are over 1,000 active oil wells in the City of Los Angeles, and 80 percent of these wells are located within 2,500 feet of a sensitive land use such as a home, school, hospital, or church. Oil and gas extraction sites routinely use and emit toxic chemicals, and these emissions are at their highest and most dangerous concentration at the source of pollution. Additionally, more than half of the active wells are located in low-income Latino and African-American neighborhoods, such as Wilmington and South L.A., which are already overburdened by environmental hazards. Residents from these neighborhoods have documented serious health problems—including nosebleeds, chronic migraines, nausea, asthma, and other respiratory illness—in addition to daily disruption from drilling noise and vibrations, foul odors, and diesel truck traffic.

There is precedent for a health and safety buffer around drilling sites in Los Angeles. The City amended its zoning code in the 1940s, with an express declaration that "oil drilling and production in urbanized areas is detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare." Classifying these operations as non-conforming uses—meaning incompatible with resident neighborhoods—resulted in the closure of hundreds of active oil wells, especially on LA's West Side.

Every Angeleno deserves to live in a safe and healthy neighborhood. Oil drilling operations are wholly incompatible with residential neighborhoods, and we urge swift completion of the legal and land use study. Further, upon timely completion of the study, we support the passage of a 2,500-foot setback ordinance to alleviate the symptoms and externalities that front-line communities experience daily.

Thank you for your action to protect the health and safety of residents living near oil drilling operations. Please contact us if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,