

# CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

## Senate

STATE CAPITOL  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA  
95814

July 3, 2019

The Honorable Toni G. Atkins  
President Pro Tempore, California Senate  
State Capitol, Room 205  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Pro Tem Atkins:

As the Legislature continues to grapple with the prevention of and fallout from catastrophic wildfires and other natural disasters, one critical component of addressing the “new abnormal” is greater utilization of distributed energy resources or “DERs.”

Unfortunately, as the size and destructive power of wildfires increase, California’s electric sector has been slow to adapt. Over 2,000 wildfires caused by utility infrastructure have led to dozens of deaths and tens of billions of dollars’ worth of damage in the past three years alone. Meanwhile, even when other factors spark wildfires, our transmission lines – spread across thousands of miles of highly flammable forest and chaparral – remain vulnerable to disruption. Multi-day power outages, including public safety power shutoff events, cause immense harm to businesses, air quality impacts (as dirty backup generators are fired up), and threats to vulnerable populations dependent on oxygen masks, refrigerated medication, and the like. Adding to the scale of the problem is our growing demand for electricity as we decarbonize the economy – a single electric vehicle can increase individual household electricity demand by 60-70% – meaning that an ever-increasing number of power lines would need to be built in the coming years if we continue on our current trajectory.

The better way forward includes improved and expanded use of DERs. Use of DERs can obviate the need for expensive infrastructure upgrades; indeed, the Independent System Operator recently cancelled \$2.6 billion in planned transmission upgrades due to increases in rooftop solar and energy efficiency. Even more importantly, resources such as rooftop solar panels paired with onsite energy storage can also keep the lights on at times when power would otherwise be unavailable. There is no other readily available resource that can provide this level of safety and resiliency (see, for example, the recent case of diesel fuel unable to reach affected communities in the Santa Monica hills in wake of a major wildfire). Finally, DERs can save host sites such as hospitals and

fire stations money throughout the year, even during non-emergency situations, via reduced electric bills.

In light of these facts, we believe that any comprehensive, effective wildfire legislation package must include:


- A statewide prohibition on discriminatory, anti-competitive fees used to discourage DER customers and operators.
- Clarification that the Self-Generation Incentive Program will be funded at the maximum level allowed by law.
- Standardized and streamlined processes to ensure timely and cost-effective interconnection of DERs to the electric grid.
- Direction to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and the California Independent System Operator to develop rules that enable full participation of DERs in electricity markets.
- A requirement that the CPUC open a docket to examine development of performance-based incentives for utilities in order to prioritize safety, customer satisfaction, cost discipline, and other key metrics.
- A requirement that the CPUC look into the possibility of broadening the definition of eligible renewable energy technologies.

We look forward to working with you further to craft a proposal that we will be able to enthusiastically support. Should you have any questions or concerns in the meantime, please do not hesitate to reach out to Miles Horton in Senator Wiener's office at (916) 651-4011 or [miles.horton@sen.ca.gov](mailto:miles.horton@sen.ca.gov).

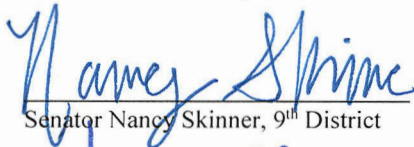
Sincerely,



Senator Scott Wiener, 11<sup>th</sup> District



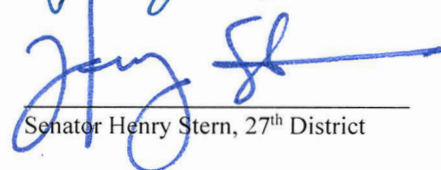
Senator Benjamin Allen, 26<sup>th</sup> District



Senator Nancy Skinner, 9<sup>th</sup> District



Senator Anna Caballero, 12<sup>th</sup> District



Senator Henry Stern, 27<sup>th</sup> District

cc: Governor Gavin Newsom  
Speaker Anthony Rendon  
Members of the Senate  
Nidia Bautista, Senate Energy,  
Utilities & Communications Committee