



October 22nd, 2024

Lindsey P. Horvath, Board President
Third District Supervisor

Hilda L. Solis
First District Supervisor

Holly J. Mitchell
Second District Supervisor

Janice Hahn
Fourth District Supervisor

Kathryn Barger
Fifth District Supervisor

Re: Request State of Emergency Related to Chiquita Canyon Landfill Disaster

Dear Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors,

We are writing to elevate an urgent and dangerous crisis with ongoing health and safety impacts to the communities of the 40th Assembly District and beyond. Since 2022, the Chiquita Canyon Landfill (CCL) has had an underground smoldering event in a closed portion of the landfill, which has not only resulted in airborne emissions, requiring installation of additional flares, but also leachate and runoff that has entered the surrounding ecosystem. It is now clear that despite millions spent on mitigation and a multi-agency response, that the chemical fire will likely be burning for several years, and could even continue for a decade. This means toxic chemicals, such as the known carcinogen Benzene, will be poisoning the air and the neighbors living there for years, as it has already been doing since 2022, putting public and environmental health at an unacceptable risk level. We must urgently focus on protecting public health - [far beyond what LACDPH is doing now, which appears to be “logging” health issues](#) - to protect these residents from any additional health impacts. No resident has been surveyed, assessed or sufficiently advised about the health risks and impacts. The study commissioned by LACDPH was insufficient when considering the full scope of the health impacts, and taking air samples while the Santa Ana winds blew fumes away from the community.

Assemblymember Schiavo stayed at a resident’s house to gain an on the ground perspective of what was taking place (video diary documenting her time can be found [here](#)) Not only did she experience multiple symptoms that community has been reporting for a year- headache, burning eyes and skin, bloody nose, tight chest/struggling for air - , but she also found a cancer cluster. On the street closest to the landfill, there are about 14 homes and 7 people fighting cancer, of which 4 were diagnosed just this year. Assemblywoman and community raised concerns about the cancer cluster at an October 15 press conference covered by: [CBS News](#), [KTLA](#), [SCVTV](#), [SCVNews](#), [Santa Clarita Signal](#), Spectrum and more. After urging Governor Newsom to call for a state of emergency in March, this new information of a possible cancer cluster and hearing directly from residents that the crisis has not lessened despite extensive work at the landfill, and Assemblywoman Schiavo confirming reported symptoms herself, spurred a [second letter](#) (attached), signed by Assemblywoman Schiavo and 16 other legislators on October 9th, 2024, again calling for a State of Emergency. **We are writing to again urge Supervisor Barger and also the full Board of Supervisors to do the same. As the Lead Enforcement Agency (LEA), we need you to act now to declare an emergency and ask for state and federal help to provide neighbors with the relocation assistance, tax relief, health study, and support they need to protect their lives and the lives of their families.**

While there have been statements that this situation does not meet the threshold for a State of Emergency, despite all of the health impacts of residents, we know it can and has been done before - by a county in Alabama just last year. Around the same time that coordinated agencies started responding to this crisis, a landfill near Birmingham Alabama also had a fire that they could not control ([article link](#)). It took no more than six weeks to have a Declaration of Emergency approved through a unanimous vote by county commissioners. The emergency declaration clears the way for local officials to access resources and create a plan to manage the situation. This is exactly what the people of Val Verde and other surrounding communities need from the Board of Supervisors. These actions can only be done through an emergency declaration and this is why we need the LA County Board of Supervisors to act now and declare the CCL and surrounding areas a disaster.

A coalition of elected officials, including Attorney General Rob Bonta, Senator Alex Padilla, Congressman Garcia, State Senators and Assemblymembers, and Supervisor Solis either personally or their staff, have joined meetings to hear from neighbors experiencing these serious health impacts and many joined meetings with the multi-agency response teams to bring greater attention and understanding to this ongoing health crisis. Additionally, the undersigned are continuing our call for the Governor to declare a State of Emergency, but we turn to the Board of Supervisors of LA County, as the LEA, to help these families who desperately need it to take the first step by declaring a local State of Emergency.

Additionally, we have received the Val Verde Civic Association (VVCA) letter sent to the members of the board last week, again requesting a State of Emergency declared by the Board of Supervisors and County. The community is truly in a state of crisis, with widespread reports of daily and long-term health symptoms and illnesses. Doctors are telling residents they must leave to protect the health of their families. Currently, residents are left without resources to relocate.

In the letter sent by the VVCA is a list of demands that include: vouchers for short term rentals or funds to fully relocate families, a county health study of the community members, operator funded benefit fund that will be administered by the county, funds for home hardening, and finally, involvement from the California Department of Health on community outreach. The undersigned support the emergency declaration and further actions, like those suggested by the VVCA, to address the concerns and needs of our community, expressed through the letter submitted by the Val Verde Civic Association on October 9th. We look forward to your response and swift action and we will continue to follow up on these needs and the safety of our community until further action is taken by the Board of Supervisors and County to protect public health and environmental health.


Thank you,



Pilar Schiavo
Assemblymember, 40th District



Tina McKinnor
Assemblymember, 61st District
Chair, Los Angeles County Delegation



Laura Friedman
Assemblymember, 44th District
Co-Chair Legislative Environmental Caucus



Issac Bryan
Assemblymember, 55th District
Chair, Natural Resources Committee



Ben Allen
Senator, 24th District
Co-Chair Legislative Environmental Caucus
Chair, Environmental Quality Committee



Monique Limon
Senator, 19th District
Vice Chair, Legislative Womens Caucus



Lisa Calderon
Assemblymember, 56th District



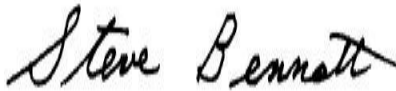
Sharon Quirk-Silva
Assemblymember, 67th District



Miguel Santiago
Assemblymember, 54th District



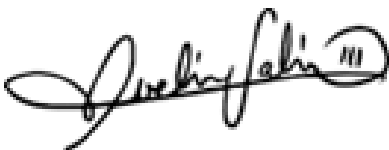
Lori D. Wilson
Assemblymember, 11th District



Steve Bennett
Assemblymember, 38th District



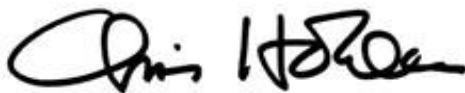
Mike A. Gipson
Assemblymember, 65th District



Avelino Valencia
Assemblymember, 68th District



Lena Gonzalez
Senator, 33rd District



Chris Holden
Assemblymember, 41st District



Eloise Gomez Reyes
Assemblymember, 50th District