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REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS
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April 23, 2025

The Honorable John Harabedian, Chair
1020 N Street, Room 107
Sacramento, CA 95814

RECEIVED 4/23/2025

RE: Audit Request – Chiquita Canyon Landfill Response

Dear Chair Harabedian,

In 2023, my office was made aware of increased odor complaints raised by residents surrounding the Chiquita Canyon Landfill (CCL) in north Los Angeles County. What has ensued over the past three years is a public health and environmental disaster, an underground fire that has recently tripled in size, from 30 to 90 acres, and is releasing toxic and cancer causing gases making nearby neighbors sick. This fire is now expected to burn for multiple decades, and it's clear people in our community cannot continue to be put in danger for even more years. It is producing millions of gallons of leachate that must be removed, as it is inflicting residents with a myriad of health conditions such as nausea, bloody noses, heart palpitations, tremors, miscarriages, cancer, and more. Some neighbors' temporary symptoms are now becoming permanent. Neighbors have become so ill they have become disabled and forced to stop working and have even lost or are on the brink of losing their homes.

The Solid Waste Management Program at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health is the Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) with primary responsibility to ensure the correct operation of the landfill, monitor landfill gas, and more, with the Conditional Use Permit approved through the county. As county, state, and federal agencies respond to worsening conditions, issue violations, and direct the operator to take actions to contain the reaction caused by the fire, impacted residents continue to be exposed to harmful toxic air around the clock. However, against the backdrop of numerous other emergencies in the county, it is evident that the response of the Los Angeles County Public Health Department to the impact the CCL community is experiencing has varied drastically from other emergencies within the County. Furthermore, after months of requesting more robust action to protect public health, and after learning the CCL fire has tripled in size and gone from burning for one to two plus decades, the LACDPH Public Officer reversed course on actions previously agreed to - some as fundamental as notifying local health providers of the public health impacts and symptoms their patients are or could exhibit if exposed to hazardous landfill gasses.

To that point, I respectfully request the committee approve a state audit that investigates the actions of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health in response to the disaster at the Chiquita Canyon Landfill. Specifically to answer the following questions.

1. What actions can the department take when hazardous chemicals are released into the community to notify residents, to engage directly with residents experiencing health effects due to the release of hazardous chemicals, and to protect residents from further exposure to hazardous chemicals?
2. How does the department assess what actions are necessary to protect health and safety when hazardous chemicals are released into the community?
3. When science and research on exposure to hazardous chemicals do not adequately reflect the symptoms, impact and experiences of the community, how has the department previously acted to document symptoms and act to protect health and safety?
4. How do actions taken related to Chiquita Canyon Landfill fire health impacts compare to actions that have historically been taken to protect public health and safety when there are releases of hazardous chemicals into the surrounding community, including but not limited to the Aliso Canyon disaster and the recent 2025 wildfires occurring within Los Angeles county?
5. If significant differences exist between prior responses to the release of hazardous chemicals within the county and the department's response to the release of hazardous chemicals into the community resulting from the underground reaction in the Chiquita Canyon Landfills, what actions or processes should the department develop to standardize their responsiveness to the health and safety threats posed to the community through release of hazardous chemicals for the coming decades?

I appreciate the committee's consideration of this audit request. Should you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office at 916-319-2040.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pilar Schiavo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Pilar" and last name "Schiavo" clearly distinguishable.

Pilar Schiavo
Assemblymember, 40th District