



Fighting for Life

East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice – 2317 Atlantic Blvd. Commerce, CA. 90040

March 15, 2016

Governor Jerry Brown
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Opposed to Exide Community Cleanup CEQA Exemption

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice and our hundreds of members in the Exide impacted communities, I write to urge you to not move forward with a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemption for the cleanup of the contaminated communities surrounding Exide. East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice (EYCEJ) is an environmental health and justice non-profit organization working towards a safe and healthy environment for communities that are disproportionately suffering the negative impacts of industrial pollution. For years we have worked to resolve the Exide issue, from closure to cleanup, and while we are encouraged by your plan to allocate \$176.6 million towards the cleanup effort, our members have concerns that a CEQA exemption will present more problems than solutions.

Our community leaders have been involved in this fight since we were speculating the extent of contamination from Exide, to the point where many of them have now found that they are Priority 1 or Priority 2 properties, mostly families with children and infants in the household. It is these leaders who have provided vision and energy throughout the fight to shut down Exide and clean up contamination. It is also these leaders who have taken the position that CEQA exemption is unacceptable. We have engaged in dialogue with both our youth and adult community leaders and their assessment is as follows: **1)** The whole reason we are in this mess is because DTSC acted irresponsibly, and did not understand the full impacts of the Exide facility on our communities. **2)** There has been much work put in to turning the agency around, but if we allow for this CEQA exemption to move forward, it will be in the vein of the old DTSC. **3)** Not understanding the full impacts of this cleanup is dangerous and would be seen by our community leaders as a disservice, and a step backward for the state. **4)** While we understand the benefits of expediting this process, the amount of time that we would gain is not worth the danger and fear we would face. **5)** It is time for the state to set its principles and do right by our communities.

The state has failed our community for decades. CEQA is designed to protect our communities and if there is a weakening of CEQA, that will be a clear sign that defending our communities will continue to rest on the shoulders of our community leaders because the state is not interested in properly prioritizing our health and well-being. The plan to dedicate \$176.6 million dollars towards the partial cleanup of the Exide disaster has come about in response to our community

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struggle. A CEQA exemption does not represent responsiveness to our community needs. We are asking that CEQA not be weakened.

We have been told that your office is being responsive to the “cries” from the communities to move quickly. We have been fighting Exide for decades. Weakening CEQA is not the way we need you to move quickly. We have spoken to our core leaders, allies in the community and beyond and no one is asking for a CEQA exemption. We have only heard strong opposition to a CEQA exemption. We urge you to not make a misstep in an attempt to be responsive. Following CEQA would be the appropriate way to be responsive to our communities at this point. If you would like to learn more about the perspectives and concerns of our members, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



mark! Lopez
Member & Executive Director
East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice

CC:

Assemblymember Anthony Rendon
Assemblymember Cristina Garcia
Assemblymember Jimmy Gomez
Assemblymember Miguel Santiago
CalEPA Director Matt Rodriguez
DTSC Director Barbara Lee
Senator Kevin DeLeon
Senator Ricardo Lara
Supervisor Hilda Solis