Fernando Fierro

I am a resident of Espanola, New Mexico, and I am asking that you deny Yucca Growth Infrastructure's air quality permit. I live here with many generations of my family and this is our home. I want to continue raising my children here knowing they have a safe and secure future. That future is under threat with this proposed air quality permit. A change to fuel cells has minimal impacts on the suffering we will endure as a result of the gas plant's air pollution. To add 10 million tons of carbon dioxide pollution and a vague estimate of toxic emissions to our active and long-time nonattainment zone would be nothing short of blatant environmental racism. We are already breathing some of the most compromised air in the country. It is unacceptable to invite a new source of hyperscale air pollution into our communities.

The carbon dioxide pollution alone will heat our atmosphere at a much faster pace and promote the formation of even more ground-level ozone. My parents works outside everyday without shade or rest breaks. I can barely pay my electricity bills in the summer as it is. We cannot afford more intense heat. The other toxic air pollutants are extremely dangerous–many of them at very low levels.

Fuel cells also create hazardous waste and the fuel cell provider for this project has a history of illegally dumping this waste and hiding it for several years. This company will likely repeat its bad habits, illegally dumping dangerous and undisclosed chemicals into our public landfills, and we will just have to wait until somebody notices? Our county has and continues to face an illegal dumping epidemic so how can I be sure that these systemic oversight failures we have locally won't continue and expand to include this dangerous and experimental fuel cell operation. A fine for illegal dumping does not undo damage or its spread once our aquifer and soils are contaminated. It also will not re-capture the volatile chemicals that are released into the air when hazardous waste is improperly stored and disposed of.

My family's health and safety should be worth more than the profits of out-of-state corporations. The only defensible options moving forward are to deny this air permit or you must hold a public hearing in-person in Santa Teresa with a component for virtual participation. Materials and the hearing itself must be translated into Spanish and meet any other accessibility needs requested by community members.