

Miguel Ramirez

To the members of the California Air Resources Board, I am writing as a California resident who is increasingly concerned about the direction and real world impact of the policies being implemented by the California Air Resources Board. CARB was created with an important mission. California once faced some of the worst air pollution in the country, and the purpose of this board was to study the problem and develop practical solutions to improve air quality and protect public health. That goal made sense and most Californians supported it.

Over time, however, the board appears to have evolved into a powerful regulatory body that is able to shape major economic and energy policy without being directly accountable to the people who are most affected by those decisions. Many residents now feel that the policies coming from this board are increasingly disconnected from the practical realities faced by working Californians. One of the clearest examples is the approach toward petroleum production and refining within the state. California still relies heavily on petroleum products for transportation, manufacturing, agriculture, and the movement of goods. Reducing in state production and refining capacity does not eliminate demand. It simply forces California to import more fuel from outside the state and often from outside the country. That means additional shipping, additional transportation emissions, and higher costs for California consumers.

When fuel costs rise, the consequences extend far beyond the gas pump. Transportation is a core part of the cost of nearly every product sold in this state. When gasoline and diesel prices increase, the cost of moving food, construction materials, and everyday goods increases as well. Those costs are passed along to consumers in the form of higher prices for groceries, housing, and services. Working families feel these increases immediately.

Fuel policy also affects aviation. Jet fuel is refined from the same petroleum supply chain that produces gasoline and diesel. When refinery capacity is restricted and fuel supply becomes tighter, the cost of jet fuel rises as well. Higher jet fuel prices directly increase airline operating costs, which then leads to higher ticket prices and higher costs for air cargo transportation. California depends heavily on aviation for business travel, tourism, and time sensitive freight. Increasing the cost of jet fuel ultimately raises transportation costs throughout the broader economy.

There is also growing confusion among the public about the long term direction of transportation policy. Californians are strongly encouraged to transition to electric vehicles. At the same time, state leaders have begun discussing the introduction of a mileage based tax to replace the gasoline tax revenue that will decline if more people drive electric vehicles. To many residents this feels like shifting the rules after the fact and it undermines public confidence in the policy direction being promoted.

The discussion around emissions also deserves honest evaluation. California has reported long term reductions in greenhouse gas emissions over the past two decades. At the same time, emissions have fluctuated in recent years. For example, statewide emissions increased after the unusually low levels recorded during the pandemic year of 2020 before declining again in later inventories. These fluctuations show that progress is complex and not always the direct result of any single policy. Many factors contribute to emissions reductions, including technological improvements in engines, cleaner fuels, federal efficiency standards, and broader economic changes. It is important that CARB remain open to examining which policies are truly effective and which ones may be producing unintended economic consequences without delivering the environmental benefits that were originally expected.

Another concern is that policy discussions sometimes appear to dismiss or avoid perspectives from

experts who disagree with the prevailing assumptions. Science and public policy both benefit from open debate. When dissenting views are excluded, it can create the impression that conclusions were decided before the evidence was fully considered.

Most Californians care deeply about clean air and a healthy environment. That commitment crosses political lines. At the same time, environmental policy must remain grounded in practicality, economic reality, and transparency.

I urge the members of this board to step outside of the internal policy echo chamber and listen carefully to the concerns being raised by residents, industry professionals, transportation experts, economists, and energy experts who experience the effects of these policies every day. A policy that sounds promising in theory should be reevaluated if it proves difficult to implement in the real world or creates unintended burdens for the people of this state.

California has long been a place that prides itself on innovation and problem solving. That spirit requires the ability to acknowledge when an approach needs adjustment. Showing the willingness to reevaluate policies and correct course would demonstrate that California is capable of both environmental leadership and honest self reflection.

Californians deserve policies that improve air quality while also keeping energy reliable, transportation affordable, and the cost of living manageable for the people who call this state home.