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10/4/2022

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E Anapamu St #407
Santa Barbara, CA, 93101

RE: Building Electrification Ordinance - OPPOSE

Dear Chair Hartmann and Supervisors:

The Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce, representing businesses from Goleta to Carpinteria, would like to express our opposition to a prohibition of natural gas infrastructure on new building construction in Santa Barbara County. The Chamber respects that climate change, and the need to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, is a pressing issue which contributes to extreme weather. Santa Barbara County's economy, business community, and residence have been significantly impacted by recent fires, mudslides, and heatwaves. However, prohibiting local natural gas infrastructure does not have enough effect on global climate change, to warrant the additional challenges created for our regional economy. The Chamber cautions the County to avoid local overregulation as a means of addressing global climate change, rather to support regional and Statewide efforts as a good neighbor and partner.

The Chamber has long been a proponent for sustainable practices and note that the local economy supports transitioning to new energy methods at a pace that is sustainable. The market has moved to embrace new trends and technologies. When the time comes that it is no longer economically viable to construct mixed fuel buildings, the market will adjust naturally. Many new buildings are doing that now, without regulation. Regulating new construction before the market fully supports the financials will lead to unintended negative economic consequences and could place unnecessary burden on construction as the County plans for at least new 5,000 housing units within the next ten years. The State will already require all electric buildings by 2029, without regard for what is economically feasible. There is no need for the County to expedite this already questionable timeline. When counties and cities get out of step with state regulations businesses suffer from the uncertainty.

Additionally, Santa Barbara County is located at the "end of the line" for both PG&E and SCE, placing us at increased risk for power outages. Requiring new construction to be all-electric will create an increased demand on the grid and will only exacerbate the current energy reliability issues we have seen in our region. Power outages have significant economic impacts on our region and financial impacts on our local businesses, as well as on our residents' quality of life. It does not seem appropriate for any of our local governments to pass regulation reaching beyond the State which will increase the likelihood of these costly outages. Please reconsider prohibiting natural gas infrastructure in new construction. Thank you for your support of the regional economy and local businesses.

Sincerely,

Kristen Miller
President & CEO
Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce