



May 15, 2023

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The Honorable Lena Gonzalez  
California State Senate  
1021 O Street, Suite 7720  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 252 (Gonzalez) Fossil fuels divestment - SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Gonzalez,

The Health Officers of California (HOAC), which represents the physician health officers of California's sixty-one city and county jurisdictions, supports your SB 252 which will divest California's public retirement systems from fossil fuels.

Health officers protect public health in their communities through disease prevention, emergency preparedness, health education and promotion, regulating environmental hazards, and advocating for programs that promote health equity. Fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas have had a significant impact on public health, and divesting our public retirement systems from them will take an important step towards improving health outcomes for all Californians, and particularly disadvantaged communities.

Many low-income and communities of color in California are located near major sources of pollution, such as highways, refineries, and power plants. This exposure to air pollution has been linked to higher rates of asthma, heart disease, and other respiratory illnesses. Disadvantaged communities are more likely to rely on water sources contaminated by fossil fuels due to inadequate infrastructure or lack of access to clean water, are more vulnerable to impacts of climate change, such as extreme heat, wildfires, and sea-level rise, and are also often located near hazardous sites such as refineries or chemical plants which can lead to exposure to toxic chemicals, injuries, and death. SB 252 will better align California's actions with its goal of combating climate change and improving the health of all Californians.

For these reasons, HOAC supports SB 252 and thanks you for introducing this important measure.

Sincerely,

Kat DeBurgh, MPH  
Executive Director  
Health Officers Association of California