

Statement of Dr. Robert Gould (PSR), Berkeley City Council, July 16, 2019

Good evening. I'm Dr. Robert Gould, here to speak on behalf of Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) in support of the proposed Berkeley City Council ordinance calling for adding a new Chapter 12.80 to the Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) prohibiting natural gas infrastructure in new buildings with an effective date of January 1, 2020.

First, I'd like to provide you some personal background. After working as a Pathologist for over 30 years at Kaiser Hospital in San Jose, since 2012 I've been an Associate Adjunct Professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences at the UCSF School of Medicine, within our Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment. Since 1993, I've been on the National Board of PSR, serving twice as President in 2003 and 2014, and since 1989 I've been President of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of PSR.

Representing thousands of health professionals, we speak for the health of our patients and communities, who are increasingly impacted by the current and unfolding public and environmental health impacts of global warming. These were summarized by the recent *Fourth National Climate Assessment*, including projected sea-level rise with flooding and contamination of water systems; extreme weather events like last year's hurricanes that devastated Puerto Rico and Houston; horrific wildfires such as we've witnessed in California; the anticipated spread of new vectors and their infectious agents with potential epidemics.

Responding to our evolving climate and health emergency, health professional organizations such as the American Public Health Association, American Nurses Association and the American Medical Association (AMA), have issued strong policy statements on global warming, with the AMA Board of Trustees passing an official policy in June 2018 calling on the "AMA to protect human health from the effects of climate change by ending its investments in fossil fuel companies." These statements have been joined by resolutions from numerous health specialty societies including the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians, and many other members of the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health.

The proposed ordinance in Berkeley is consistent with addressing these health concerns about global warming in general, and with the related serious air pollution impacts directly related to continued use of fossil fuels, including natural gas. Many scientific reports have underscored the serious impacts of air pollution on lung development, and how exposure to air pollution among pregnant women and children can lead to a lifetime of health problems.

The ordinance's call for all-electric new construction would help improve indoor and outdoor air quality for Berkeley residents. The combustion of gas inside our homes produces harmful

indoor air pollutants, specifically nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitric oxide, formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, and ultrafine particles. These odorless and undetectable gas combustion pollutants are associated with acute and chronic respiratory diseases such as asthma: a 2018 study published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* indicated that for 12.3 per cent of asthma sufferers aged 14 or younger in Australia, the condition was triggered or worsened by exposure to gas stoves.

In addition, scientists at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in 2013 estimated that 60 percent of homes in the state that cook at least once a week with a gas stove can reach pollutant levels that would be illegally exceed federal standards if found outdoors.

We believe that all-electric new construction will also be key to mitigating outdoor air pollution in Berkeley, which is a particular concern for low-income communities and people of color, who are exposed to higher incidences of particulate matter (PM 2.5) and other harmful pollutants such as nitrogen oxide that contribute to asthma, other respiratory diseases, lung cancer, and premature death.

In conclusion, we hope that Berkeley will strongly support all-electric new construction as an essential step for improving air quality in Berkeley and throughout the greater Bay Area, while making an important contribution towards preventing and mitigating the effects of the climate emergency we, and future generations will be facing.