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September 18, 2019

Good afternoon,

We are writing regarding the AB617 program nomination process and to bring to your attention the distinct air quality concerns of the community of La Viña, CA, which was included in our organization's AB617 nominations for this year. We are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the California Air Resources Board on ensuring that communities in need of air monitoring and pollution reduction plans are able to access these resources.

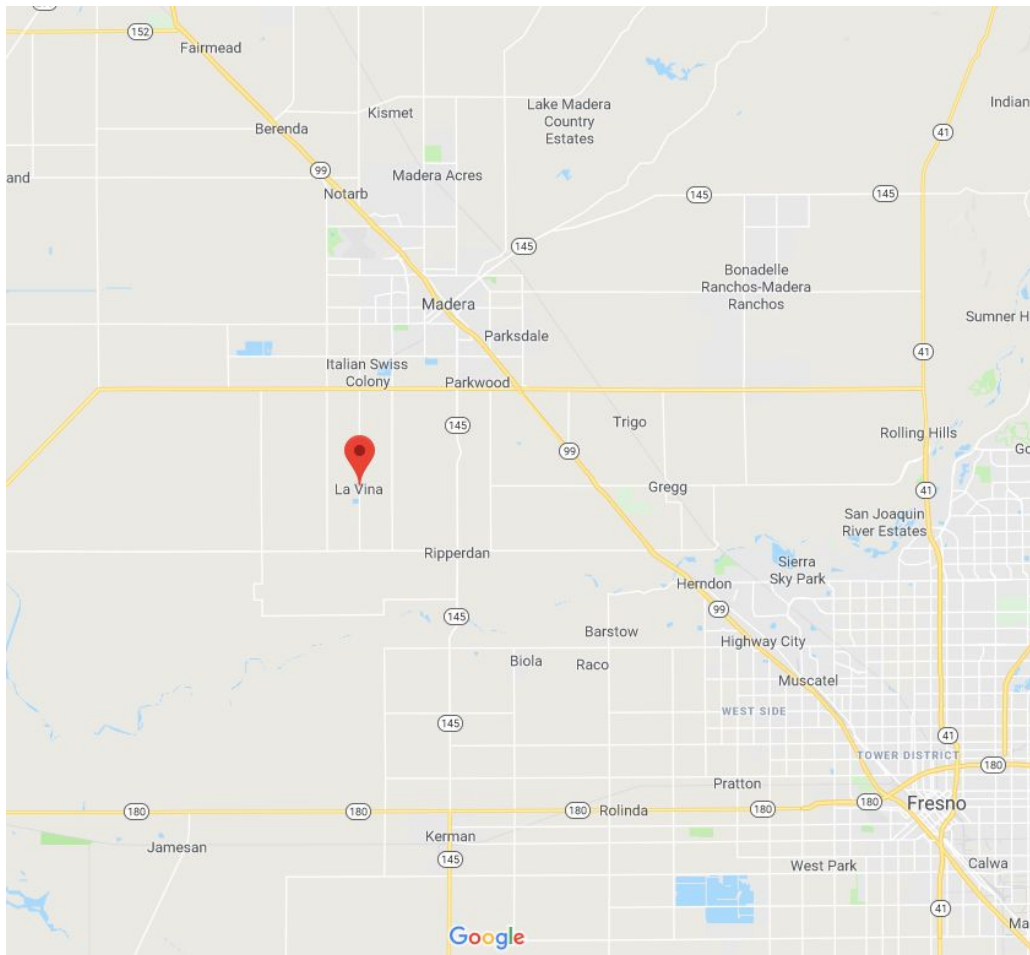
### **I. Introduction to La Viña**

La Viña is a small Disadvantaged Unincorporated Community in Madera County in census tract 6039001000 between Road 24 and Road 23 ½ along Avenue 9. The vast majority of the population in this small community is “Hispanic”/Latinx, predominantly with familial roots in Mexico. The community was initially settled by farmworkers, and many residents still work in agriculture today. The most current American Community Survey data from 2017 reports that the community has a population of 288 people, 95.1% of whom have incomes below the poverty line<sup>1</sup>. That said, La Viña is most likely a severely undercounted community, since Madera County reports 178.6 connections to the small community water system they operate<sup>2</sup>. (Nearly all of these connections are single family homes or apartments with multiple residents.)

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2017). *American Community Survey 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from *Census Reporter Profile page for La Vina, CA* <<http://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US0640872-la-vina-ca/>>

<sup>2</sup> Madera County MD-37 Water and Sewer Rate Study. Bartle Wells Associates. May 3, 2019.



La Viña's location on Google Maps in relation to other communities and cities in the Central Valley.

## **II. Known Need for Air Quality Monitoring/Air Quality Concerns**

As indicated by the community's name, it has been historically surrounded by vineyards. More recently, as grape fields were converted to more popular, yet water intensive, cash crops, the community became enclosed by almond and walnut orchards in addition to the remaining vineyards. On the edges of the community, residents' homes line up to rows of almond and walnut trees which create air quality concerns for residents who are directly exposed to pesticides for much of the year in addition to the thick clouds of dust which cover the community during the nut harvesting season.

Residents report that crop-duster planes regularly spray pesticides directly over their homes en route to the fields without notice. Even when the planes are not spraying directly overhead, the proximity of the fields makes it impossible for the community to not be impacted by wind drift, which carries the pesticides into people's homes through their heating and cooling systems, and directly onto those outside. Residents also shared that almond growers, in an effort to expand the



production season, have begun growing two varieties of almond trees around the community-- one that is harvested beginning in the late summer, and another that is harvested in the early fall. As a result of the extended harvest season, the pesticide application season has been expanded as well, exposing La Viña residents to harmful dust particles and to pesticides for months on end each year and further exacerbating the air quality problems plaguing the community.

Residents share that the almond harvest wreaks additional havoc on the respiratory health and overall wellness of their community. Dust kicked up by the almond harvesting equipment plummeting through the fields clouds the community and enters homes, leaving residents no escape from breathing in dangerous particles. Since growers have extended the harvest season, residents inhale the dust for double the time that they used to each year.

#### **A. Data from CalEnviroScreen**

These anecdotal reports from residents are consistent with CalEnviroScreen data at the census tract level. Census tract 6039001000 stands at the 95 percentile for PM2.5 with a concentration of 13.730 micrograms per meter cubed, and at the 91 percentile for pesticide application, with an estimated 1,606.395 pounds of active ingredients-- the most common of which are the toxic 1,3-Dichloropropene<sup>3</sup>, Potassium N Methylthiocarbamate<sup>4</sup>, Chlorothalonil<sup>5</sup>, Hydrogen Cyanamide<sup>6</sup>, and Chlorpyrifos<sup>7</sup>-- used per square mile<sup>8</sup>.

#### **B. Department of Pesticide Regulation Data: Geographically Specific Information**

However, while the CalEnviroScreen data listed above is certainly helpful and reflective of the air quality concerns that residents regularly report in La Viña, it most likely does not accurately

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<sup>3</sup> 1,3 Dichloropropene. <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-09/documents/1-3-dichloropropene.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> RED Fact Sheet: Methylthiocarbamate Salts - Metam Sodium/Potassium and MITC, US Environmental Protection Agency Office of Pesticide Programs. July 10, 2008.

[https://www3.epa.gov/pesticides/chem\\_search/reg\\_actions/reregistration/fs\\_G-56\\_10-Jul-08.pdf](https://www3.epa.gov/pesticides/chem_search/reg_actions/reregistration/fs_G-56_10-Jul-08.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Chlorothalonil-- toxicity, side effects, diseases, and environmental impacts, Pesticides.News. December 7, 2017.

<https://www.pesticides.news/2017-12-07-chlorothalonil-toxicity-side-effects-diseases-and-environmental-impacts.html>

<sup>6</sup> "Hydrogen cyanamide\* is used in agriculture as a plant growth regulator and is applied to many deciduous plants to stimulate uniform budbreak after dormancy, resulting in uniform flowering and maturity. Hydrogen cyanamide is highly toxic, and adverse health effects from contact include severe irritation and ulceration of the eyes, skin, and respiratory tract (1,2). The substance also inhibits aldehyde dehydrogenase and can produce acetaldehyde syndrome (e.g., vomiting, parasympathetic hyperactivity, dyspnea, hypotension, and confusion) when exposure coincides with alcohol use." Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: April 29, 2005. Update: Hydrogen Cyanamide-- Related Illnesses-- Italy 2002-2004. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5416a3.htm>

<sup>7</sup> "California Acts to Prohibit Chlorpyrifos Pesticide," Barnum, Alex and Fadipe, Charlotte. California Environmental Protection Agency. May 8, 2019. Accessed via:

<https://calepa.ca.gov/2019/05/08/california-acts-to-prohibit-chlorpyrifos-pesticide/>

<sup>8</sup> CalEnviroScreen 3.0, California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. Accessed September 2019 at <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/report/calenviroscreen-30>



reflect the unique challenges that the community faces *within* a census tract that they share with differently situated communities. For example, across Highway 99 from La Viña in the same census tract lies Madera Ranchos, a predominantly white and upper-middle class community that is also surrounded by agricultural land uses, yet faces significantly less pesticide exposure.

According to DPR data,<sup>9</sup> which presents a more localized picture of pesticide exposure by utilizing data from pesticide use reports, residents in La Vina are consistently exposed to more pesticides than their neighbors in Madera Ranchos. DPR's data regarding the poundage of pesticides applied each year to the La Viña township consistently hovers around 1 million pounds per year (ranging from 888,088 lbs to 1,098,307 lbs in recent years)<sup>10</sup> while the data corresponding to their neighbors in Madera Ranchos' tends to hover around 300,000 pounds per year (ranging from 245,936 lbs to 370,672 in recent years)<sup>11</sup>. As a result, depending on the year, La Viña as a township is applied with anywhere between 2.5 and 4.3 times more pesticides than Madera Ranchos, an alarming racial and economic disparity not represented by the census tract data.

DPR data also includes a list of the 10 most heavily applied pesticides in each township section. In La Viña, toxic chemicals such as 1,3 Dichloropropene, Chloripyrifos, Glyphosate, and Hydrogen Cyanamide appear on these lists among other harmful pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides.

As a result, it is no wonder that, at our community meetings with La Viña residents each month, community leaders share with us stories about community health concerns that they believe stem from environmental impacts including air quality. They reinforce that these issues are of utmost concern and a primary priority for their community, and have repeatedly brought up how nearly each household in the community is plagued by asthma, cancer, and other potentially lethal health concerns. For instance, one resident shared, "this issue [of air quality] is a top priority for us. Because if you look around our community, just about every family is directly affected by asthma. If it's not the kids that have asthma, then it's the parents, or the grandparents. Everyone here has or knows someone who has asthma or some other condition."

### **III. Community Capacity and Commitment for Involvement in AB617**

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<sup>9</sup> Tracking California, Public Health Institute. Agricultural Pesticide Mapping Tool. Accessed September 2019 from [www.trackingcalifornia.org/pesticides/pesticide-mapping-tool](http://www.trackingcalifornia.org/pesticides/pesticide-mapping-tool).

<sup>10</sup> DPR time series for Township #20M12S17E

<sup>11</sup> DPR time series for Township #20M11S19E



Despite the challenges, disparate air quality concerns, and health hazards that this community faces, it is a vibrant and cohesive community of hard-working families who are committed to improving the place they call home.

A dedicated community group of about 40 La Viña residents who have been working with our organization for several years recently succeeded in pushing Madera County to invest in their community for the first time in decades, achieving long-needed road repairs and the establishment of a four-person resident committee that holds working meetings with the County each month to discuss the path forward on community priorities.

In addition to our organization, Self Help Enterprises has a long-standing partnership with and presence in the community. Self Help Enterprises developed a multi-family housing apartment complex and a subdivision of single family homes in the community decades ago, and continues to regularly partner with the community on an ongoing basis for the operation and maintenance of a community center as well as for local, regional, and statewide advocacy work.

Given the unique needs for air monitoring and the capacity and commitment of residents to be involved in the creation of a pollution reduction plan, our organization hopes that the SJVAPCD and CARB will take this community into consideration as a recipient of the resources and programming AB617 has to offer. Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions. Once again, we thank you for the opportunity to collaborate in developing localized solutions to air quality concerns in the most affected communities, and we look forward to discussing solutions for La Viña further.

Sincerely,

Madeline Harris  
Policy Advocate