

## San Joaquin Valley Environmental Justice Steering Committee

4991 E. McKinley Ave, Ste 109

Fresno, CA 93727



October 15, 2020

Division Chief Office of Community Air Protection  
California Air Resources Board  
1001 I Street Sacramento, CA 95814  
*[via electronic submittal to [communityair@arb.ca.gov](mailto:communityair@arb.ca.gov)]*

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District  
1990 E. Gettysburg Avenue  
Fresno, CA 93716  
*[via electronic submittal to [AB617@valleyair.org](mailto:AB617@valleyair.org)]*

### **RE: Support of the Arvin/Lamont South Kern Region Community Nomination for AB 617**

Dear AB 617 Community Selection Committee,

The San Joaquin Valley Environmental Justice Steering Committee would like to express strong support for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) nomination of Arvin/Lamont in Kern County as an AB 617 community for the third year. Data suggests that the Arvin/Lamont area is highly affected by regional air pollution as well as significant factors that contribute to local exposures such as large, industrialized agricultural operations, concentrated warehouse distribution centers, neighborhood oil and gas production and refining, among other factors.

The SJV EJ Steering Committee previously identified Arvin/Lamont as the number one area in the Rural category in the nomination document they submitted to the California Air Resources

Board (CARB) and the SJVAPCD on June 6, 2018. This nomination was the result of a thorough analysis of indicators that included population characteristics, regional and local air pollution, health data, as well as the capacity from community-based organizations that is necessary to successfully engage with residents, the Air District, and CARB in the AB 617 CAPP process.

Using CalEnviroScreen (3.0) tool, the census tracts located within the proposed community rank in the top 15% statewide overall, with emphasis for PM2.5 and ozone impacts, which represents a number of health and socioeconomic factors including asthma, cardiovascular disease, low birth weight, educational attainment, housing burdened low-income households, linguistic isolation, poverty, and unemployment. The City of Arvin has a population of 21,000. 90% of residents are Latino/a/x/Hispanic. The median household income in Arvin is \$32,000. Income is derived mainly from agricultural work in the surrounding farms. The City of Arvin's housing stock is noteworthy; more than 50% of people live in rented homes and less than 45% of Arvin residents own their own homes. Lamont has a population of 15,120. 95% Latina/o/x/Hispanic. Homes are less than 40% occupantowned and the vast majority are owned by investors living outside Lamont. The median household income is \$34,000. The majority of Lamont residents are employed by major agricultural companies operating in the region.

The air pollution concerns identified in 2018 for the Arvin/Lamont area have plagued the community for decades and persist today. Arvin/Lamont continues to be surrounded on all sides by agricultural lands and is one of the most heavily impacted by pesticides in Kern County. Lamont is also directly downwind from one of the largest oil & gas refineries in the county. Lamont and Arvin suffer from some of the worst environmental conditions in all the states with PM2.5 levels being the worst in the nation. The water has been heavily polluted by the historic misuse of pesticides and oil and gas byproducts. The City of Arvin is completely surrounded by agriculture and is one of the locations that apply the most pesticides on a yearly basis. Arvin also has a long history with oil and gas producers, including many small producers that generate low volumes of crude oil but large amounts of air toxins and are largely exempted from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's regulations.

The SJV EJ Steering Committee stands ready to strategize with stakeholders on effective reductions to improve community health in a way that prioritizes equity and environmental justice principles. We urge CARB to select Arvin/Lamont as a Year 3 CAPP community or Madera County communities of La Vina, with Ripperdan, Bordan, Parksdale, and Parkwood included.

Sincerely,

## The San Joaquin Valley Environmental Justice Steering Committee

### Member organizations:

Catholic Charities Diocese of Stockton

Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment (CRPE)

Central Valley Air Quality Coalition (CVAQ)

Central California Asthma Collaborative (CCAC)

Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN)

Centro Binacional Para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO)

Californians for Pesticide Reform (CPR)

Clean Water Action

El Pueblo Para el Aire y Agua Limpia

Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability (LCJA)

Latino Environmental Advancement Project (LEAP Institute)

Little Manila Rising

Valley Improvement Projects (VIP)