



April 24, 2020

The Honorable Bill Dodd
State Capitol
Room 4032
Sacramento, CA 95814

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RE: HOAC Supports Senate Bill 862

Dear Senator Dodd,

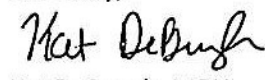
The Health Officers Association of California (HOAC), which represents the physician health officers in California's sixty-one city and county jurisdictions, is proud to support your SB 862, relating to de-energization during times of wildfire risk.

De-energization can create risks to individuals with AFN (Access and Functional Needs; i.e. seniors, children, and people with disabilities, limited English proficiency, transportation disadvantages, experiencing homelessness, and who rely on life-support equipment.) The current law only requires utilities to show how they will address the needs of individuals who rely on electrically operated life support equipment. The law does not require a utility to spell out how it intends to address the needs of other handicapped and AFN individuals whose health and safety is jeopardized during an outage.

Fortunately, your bill broadens the de-energization protocol requirements included in wildfire mitigation plans by requiring those protocols to address the needs of AFN individuals during an outage. Additionally, for purposes of this Act, the bill defines AFN individuals as those having developmental or intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, chronic conditions, injuries, limited English proficiency or who are non-English speaking, seniors, children, people living in institutionalized settings, or those who are low income, homeless, or transportation disadvantaged.

Several of HOAC's members were on the front lines of the recent wildfires' most pressing public health challenges. The seriousness with which health officers take the climate crisis generally was reflected in our most recent Continuing Medical Education program, entitled "Climate Change: A Public Health Emergency!" During power shutoffs, as at any other time, local health officers are called upon to protect their communities from disease and injury. This becomes harder without power. Local health departments have worked hard to make sure their residents have access to needed equipment during power shutoffs. Thank you for introducing this bill.

Sincerely,


Kat DeBurgh, MPH
Executive Director