ORGANIZED LABOR, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND LOCAL CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE SUPPORT REVENUE ENHANCEMENTS AND LOCAL BENEFITS FOR IMPERIAL VALLEY COMMUNITIES
RE: SUPPORT - Lithium Extraction Excise Tax per Metric Ton Based on a Flat Rate & Lithium Valley Development Budget Proposals

Dear President Pro Tempore Atkins, Speaker Rendon, Budget Chairs Skinner and Ting, Assemblymember E.Garcia, and Senator Hueso:

On behalf of the undersigned organized labor, environmental justice, organized labor, public health, and local Chambers of Commerce serving and partnering with disadvantaged communities of the Imperial Valley, we collectively submit this letter to support the following May Revision proposals of the Governor’s Budget regarding Lithium Valley Development:

- The Proposed Trailer Bill Language which would establish and levy a Lithium Extraction Excise Tax on California’s emerging lithium producers based on a flat rate per metric ton.
- $80 million to expand the San Diego State University, Brawley Center in Imperial Valley to support a local workforce pipeline.
- $5 million to the County of Imperial and $800,000 to support community engagement in the county’s environmental impact report related to geothermal and lithium recovery in the Salton Sea region.
- Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia’s budget request for $5 million to fund the First 40 Campaign, a community-led initiative aimed at installing 40 publicly accessible EV charging stations in Imperial County which currently accounts for the lowest number of EV chargers per capita in the entire State.

In particular, the flat rate Lithium Extraction Excise Tax will provide for Salton Sea restoration and support much-needed local infrastructure, public services and community benefit projects.
Eighty percent (80%) of the tax revenue, as proposed, will provide appropriate government level services to our residents in the form of enhanced public safety, road and bridge improvements, expanded judicial buildings, social services, and quality of life amenities including new recreational and cultural/arts facilities. The remaining twenty percent (20%) will be directed at improving and restoring our deteriorating Salton Sea helping mitigate the public health risks associated with its decline.

The Imperial Valley includes some of the most economically disadvantaged communities in California. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a particularly difficult impact on the Imperial Valley, with the unemployment rate climbing to 27.8%, compared to the California unemployment rate of 15.9% and national unemployment rate of 13.0% during the height of the pandemic. The economic recovery in the Imperial Valley has been extremely slow and the local economy continues to struggle on an individual and community wide basis with unemployment and decreased local revenue. On a broader scale, the municipalities and State-sanctioned funds for Imperial Valley are struggling to cover the costs of the Salton Sea Management Plan to address air quality issues in the region. The Salton Sea Management Plan lacks appropriate funding and progress for a long-term air quality solution. Thus, community engagement and stable local revenue streams are vital to protect the disadvantaged populations of Imperial Valley and ensure they do not bear the burdens of climate change. The air quality issues associated with the Salton Sea need urgent attention and a steady funding stream to ensure they are addressed.

These investments, as proposed, will spur the development of Lithium Valley’s new green economy and help the State transition from its dependency on fossil fuels. Further, stable revenue will also facilitate the creation of much-needed high road jobs in our region which has a history of some of the highest unemployment rates in the country. It is for these reasons that we support the aforementioned Lithium Valley Development allocations and the flat rate tax per metric ton as proposed.

Sincerely,

Luis Olmedo, Executive Director
Comite Cívico del Valle
Imperial Valley, California

Isabel Solis, President
Los Amigos de la Comunidad Inc.
Imperial Valley, California

Dr. Conrado Barzaga, Executive Director
Desert Healthcare District
Coachella Valley, California

John Hernandez, Executive Director
Our Roots Multi-Cultural Center
Imperial Valley, California

Eduardo Guevara
Promotores Comunitarios Del Desierto
Coachella Valley, California

David M. Villarino, President/CEO
Farmworker Institute of Education & Leadership Development (FIELD)

Eduardo Guevara
Promotores Comunitarios Del Desierto
Coachella Valley, California

Dr. Conrado Barzaga, Executive Director
Desert Healthcare District
Coachella Valley, California

Eric Reyes
Coalición de la Buena Salud y Bienestar Comunitario

Guadalupe Rosales
La Union Hace La Fuerza
Coachella Valley, California
Anna Lisa Vargas  
Communities For A New California (CNC)  
Coachella Valley, California

Blanca Morales, CEO  
Calexico Wellness Center  
Imperial Valley, California

Daniela Flores  
Imperial Valley Equity and Justice Coalition

Jesse Marquez  
Coalition for a Safe Environment

Sylvia Chavez  
Calipatria Chamber of Commerce  
Imperial Valley, California

Chris Froelich  
Northend Action Council

Brigette Browning  
San Diego & Imperial Counties Labor Council

Jeremy Abrams  
IBEW Local 569

Matthew Vasilakis  
Climate Action Campaign

Thomas Hintze  
UAW Western States

Steve Beringer  
United Association of Plumbers, Steamfitters and HVACR Local Union 230

Guadalupe L. Ponce  
Campesinos Unidos

Dr. Arcela Nuñez-Alvarez  
Universidad Popular

Rey León, Executive Director  
The Latino Education, Advocacy, & Policy Institute (LEAP)  
Huron, California

Larry Lewis, CEO  
Pioneers Memorial Healthcare District  
Imperial Valley, California

Janira Figueroa  
Lithium Valley Community Coalition

Maria Nava Froelich, City Councilmember  
City of Calipatria

Brittany Saiza, President  
Niland Chamber of Commerce

Catalina A Santillan  
Imperial Valley Respite

Rick Bates  
Unite HERE Local 30

Kevin Hamilton  
Central California Asthma Collaborative

Katie Santillan  
Sonia, Inc.

Nayamin Martinez, Executive Director  
Central California Environmental Justice Network

Bobby Olvera Jr., International Vice President (Mainland)  
International Longshore & Warehouse Union

Marven Norman  
Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice

Marco Lizarraga, Executive Director  
La Cooperativa Campesina de California