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California State Senate

SENATOR
BEN ALLEN

TWENTY-FOURTH SENATE DISTRICT

DISTRICT OFFICE
2512 ARTESIA BLVD., SUITE 320
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May 19, 2023

Barbara Romero
Director and General Manager
Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment
1149 South Broadway Avenue, 9th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90015

Dear Ms. Romero,

We write with thanks to you and the Los Angeles Sanitation & Environment (LASAN) staff for your diligence in addressing the ongoing concerns following the major sewage spill at the Hyperion Water Reclamation Plant on July 11, 2021. The initial incident, which caused an environmental emergency with the discharge of an estimated 13 million gallons of untreated wastewater into the Santa Monica Bay and corresponding damage to facility equipment, posed a potential disaster that could have disrupted a vital municipal service for millions of people in the Los Angeles region. As it is imperative that we prevent a similar incident from occurring, we are encouraged by the progress made in modernizing the facility and resolving operational failures. We also recognize the difficulty of operating and renovating such a massive facility. Nevertheless, we remain deeply concerned about the ongoing nuisance- and health-related impacts to the people who live and work nearby.

Residents of the City of El Segundo, the Playa Del Rey neighborhood of Los Angeles, and surrounding areas have endured persistent hardship due to foul gases released from the Hyperion facility. Nearly 21 months after the sewage spill, residents continue to report a range of issues affecting their quality of life and health concerns including nausea, rashes, and eye irritation. As the region's primary air quality regulator, South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) has investigated and substantiated thousands of related complaints and mandated LASAN to abate the odor issue. This situation is untenable.

It is of utmost importance that LASAN work swiftly to meet the remaining requirements outlined in the SCAQMD Order of Abatement dated September 14, 2022. This includes recently agreed-upon provisions that stipulate interim odor-mitigating measures and the refurbishment and replacement of Primary Clarifier Batteries and their covers, which have been identified as the root of the facility's odor issue. Unfortunately, despite some success in expediting these projects, we understand that residents near the facility may not experience sustained relief from foul odors for several more months. We urge you to explore ways to further expedite these projects. We also ask that you reconsider suggestions from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, including their recommendation for the Hyperion facility to monitor typical sewage-related gases in conjunction with the currently monitored hydrogen sulfide.

Meanwhile, transparency and communication are essential to cultivating trust and confidence between LASAN and affected communities. We often hear frustration from constituents concerning your department's public presentations and emission notifications. We appreciate your work on this front and ask that you increase the frequency and consistency of community updates, expressly informing residents about project developments and anticipated timelines for the remaining mitigation and refurbishment efforts.

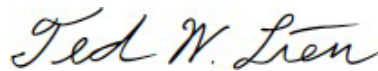
We would like the opportunity to discuss these matters with you and your staff, and receive an update regarding LASAN's plan of action in light of the enactment of SCAQMD's supplemental abatement provisions. Please contact Olina Wibroe-Benson of Senator Ben Allen's office at (310) 318-6994 to coordinate a virtual meeting at your earliest opportunity.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to working together to ensure that Hyperion operations and regional air quality return to normal as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Ben Allen
State Senator, 26th District



Ted Lieu
U.S. Congressman, 36th District



Al Muratsuchi
State Assemblymember, 66th District



Holly J. Mitchell
Los Angeles County Supervisor, 2nd District