

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 1, 2022

CONTACT:

Kacey Bonner

kbonner@chromacollaborative.com

310-402-3013

COMMUNITIES
FOR A BETTER
ENVIRONMENT
established 1978



WILMINGTON RESIDENTS DEMAND ACTION FROM THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES AGAINST ILLEGAL DRILLING ACTIVITIES

Frontline Communities, Joined by U.S. Congresswoman Nanette Barragán, Expose Gross Permitting Violations By Warren Resources That Harm Community Health

LOS ANGELES – Frontline residents and allies from across Los Angeles came together at a press conference today in Los Angeles' Wilmington area to demand the City of Los Angeles take action against oil operator Warren Resources (Warren Inc.) for illegal oil drilling activities that threaten community health and safety. The press conference was held by Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), Standing Together Against Neighborhood Drilling (STAND-LA), and U.S. Congresswoman Nanette Barragán who joined them to expose actions by Warren Inc. that disregard local permitting regulations and have been occurring since 2018, including failing to conduct comprehensive environmental reviews and misrepresenting information in at least 19 permit applications to the state's oil and gas regulatory agency in violation of the Los Angeles Municipal Code. Participants in the press conference called on the city to shut down Warren Inc.'s illegal operations without delay. They also demanded that the City of Los Angeles expedite drafting and adopting the ordinance to phase out oil and gas extraction based on a motion that the Los Angeles City Council passed in January 2022.

"The oil industry is not above the law. They will not take advantage of my constituents in Wilmington," said Congresswoman Barragán. If it's a fight they want, they've got one. We will not stand silent and let them prioritize profits over the health, safety and quality of life of our community. The oil industry would not dare try illegally drilling next to homes and parks in affluent communities like Malibu, Bel Air or Brentwood, so they target our Latino working-class neighborhoods instead. Unpermitted oil drilling is illegal, it must be shut down immediately, and the operator needs to be held fully accountable by Los Angeles."

Speakers also highlighted the role the state's oil and gas regulatory agency, California's Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM), has played in allowing oil operators to skirt regulations and put communities' health and safety at risk. They noted that CalGEM routinely fails to coordinate with local oversight agencies that impose additional regulations on the oil and gas industry. This failure often results in the rubberstamping of oil operation approvals while undermining local measures aimed at protecting the environment and public health. Alison Hahm, an attorney for CBE who works with STAND-LA, likened CalGEM to its predecessor, the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR), which was formerly responsible for oversight of the oil and gas industry in California.

Ms. Hahm said, "The whole point of replacing DOGGR with CalGEM was to shift oversight focus to holding fossil fuel companies accountable and prioritizing protecting public health and the environment. CalGEM has instead simply maintained the status quo, and their complacency continues to help grow Big Oil's profits while failing to protect people. Warren Inc.'s ability to dodge local review and manipulate CalGEM's permitting process is a stark reminder that the only way to truly safeguard communities is to phase out urban oil drilling entirely. No one should be forced to live on the frontlines of oil drilling."

CalGEM's failure to regulate oil and gas operators and protect Californians, in contravention of Governor Gavin Newsom's unequivocal promise to transition away from fossil fuels, was on full display last week. Community organizers found thirteen wells spewing a flood of methane in explosive quantities into a

neighborhood in Bakersfield. CalGEM's health and safety setbacks rulemaking process – a process that would prevent this type of methane flood in the future if it applied to existing wells – is still delayed. In light of this health hazard, CBE, VISION, and other environmental justice groups called on CalGEM and the Newsom Administration to put setbacks into law and apply them to existing wells immediately.

Finally, Wilmington resident and intern with CBE's Youth for Environmental Justice program Nizgui Gomez spoke about Warren Inc.'s illegal actions in the context of the community that lives next to oil and gas drilling sites. Her remarks underscored the significant inequity that frontline communities face and how they disproportionately bear the burden of dirty industries like oil and gas because companies treat them as expendable.

"We all deserve to live in healthy communities, yet Warren Inc. and other oil companies have broken the rules for decades while carelessly putting residents' health in harm's way," said Gomez. "I've lived in this neighborhood for years, and as my health has worsened, Warren's pockets have grown. Through the years, Warren Inc.'s numerous violations prove they don't care about our communities, and far too many so-called leaders have co-signed on our communities as "sacrifice zones" without a thought. Now our communities are saying no more and that it's beyond time to phase out this dirty industry and put community health and safety first."

###

Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) is one of the preeminent environmental justice organizations in the nation. Founded in 1978, the mission of CBE is to build people's power in California's communities of color and low-income communities to achieve environmental health and justice by preventing and reducing pollution and building green, healthy, and sustainable communities and environments. CBE provides residents in heavily polluted urban communities in California with organizing skills, leadership training and legal, scientific, and technical assistance so that they can successfully confront threats to their health and well-being.

STAND-LA (Standing Together Against Neighborhood Drilling) is a city-wide coalition calling for a broad phase-out of oil and gas extraction in the City and County of Los Angeles to protect the health and safety of communities. The City of Los Angeles is home to the largest urban oil field in the country, with more than 1,000 active oil wells, the vast majority of which are located in residential communities.