March 23, 2016

City Council President Lynette Gibson McElhaney
Oakland City Hall
1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Council President McElhaney and Councilmembers:

Sinkler Miller Medical Association represents 200 East Bay African-American physicians. We are committed to quality health for all residents of Oakland and the greater East Bay community.

It has come to our attention that the proposed bulk commodities terminal facility on the site of the former Oakland Army base may be used for transporting coal through the neighborhoods of East and West Oakland.

We are very concerned about the impact coal shipment through Oakland would have on the health and well-being of the residents of Oakland. The long and short term effects of inhalation of coal dust have been well documented by the US EPA, California EPA as well as throughout the medical literature. The physicians of Sinkler Miller Medical Association care for many of the residents of East and West Oakland. The health disparities of the residents in these communities are already significant. The children in these neighborhoods have the highest rate of asthma throughout the Bay Area. The already existing health disparities would be further increased by the further pollution of our air with coal dust.

The impact of coal and fossil fuel pollutants on our environment has and continues to be documented. In the resolution introduced by councilmembers Kalb, Gibson McElhaney and Kaplan, filed on May 29, 2014, unanimously backed by the entire council, the resolution addressed the same concerns that the residents of Oakland and our country are currently voicing.

“According to the BNSF Railway, each coal car in a 125-car coal train loses, on average, 500 pounds of coal per car in transit, for a total of up to 60,000 lbs. lost per train on an average trip.”

“Whereas, coal contains toxic heavy metals – including mercury, arsenic, and lead- and exposure to these toxic heavy metals in high concentrations is linked to cancer and birth defects”

The health and well-being of our residents as well as the impact on our environment cannot and should not be dictated by monetary gain.
Physicians Dedicated to a Healthy Community

The actions that all of us as individuals and organizations take today will have an impact on generations to come.

Sinkler Miller Medical Association is a member of the Alameda Contra Costa Medical Association. We feel strongly that the city council should stand by its initial resolution and do everything in its power to prevent the transport of coal through Oakland.

Sincerely,

Joy D. Foster M.D.
President
Sinkler Miller Medical Association

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