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Press Release

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Assemblymember Cristina Garcia implores the Governor to make Environmental Justice communities a priority, after Veto of AB 995 *Statement from Assemblymember Cristina Garcia*

(Sacramento) – Assemblymember Cristina Garcia (D-Bell Gardens) implores Governor Gavin Newsom to actually put actions behind his words and truly make Environmental Justice communities a priority, after his veto of Assembly Bill 995, which would have started high-level actions to reset the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) into a department that is more transparent and accountable. This bill would have implemented recommendations of the Independent Review Panel (IRP), create a board to improve DTSC, and would have raised over \$20 million to help fund the department.

In December 2016, the IRP released a comprehensive list of recommendations compiled from the meetings and reports conducted in the panel's first 11 months. The Legislature has made numerous efforts over the past 6 years to improve different aspects of DTSC programs, but the previous and current administrations vetoed such efforts or asked the Legislature to hold-off while internal efforts to improve the function of DTSC were underway.

Last year, DTSC reform was parked with the promise that it would be a priority for the Administration during 2020, but with this veto, again environmental justice communities are told to wait. "Once again, communities of color are told they are not a priority, because other emergencies are taking precedent. But these communities are more vulnerable to the Climate Change and Coronavirus emergencies that the Governor has prioritized. This veto simply tells Black and Brown people that we're disposable and that we're at the back of the line," said Assemblymember Cristina Garcia.

"Like the Governor, I also want brown fields cleaned up, but the Governor also fails to realize his veto of AB 995 will result in greater needs because the state will still not have adequate financial assurances and will be stuck paying for more clean up," said Garcia.

"On the heels of Climate week and his announcement to be more aggressive on Climate Change, I believe the Governor has once again missed an opportunity to prioritize our most overburdened and vulnerable communities to its effects by vetoing AB 995," stated Garcia. Climate Change means that our communities are getting hotter and more toxic. These same toxics make people more vulnerable to COVID-19. "It's not a coincidence that South East Los Angeles is the epicenter of COVID-19 in Los Angeles County and this is in part because we have been treated like we are disposable for generations," continued Garcia. Across the country, the coronavirus pandemic poses a severe threat to people whose lungs, immune systems, and hearts have been weakened by environmental contaminates.

"I've done my part and the Governor now has to do his part. I look forward to working with the Governor to ensure we craft solutions in 2021 that are both effective and equitable in the fight against man-made disasters. The Governor must make DTSC reform a top priority in 2021 if he truly values Black and Brown people's health and lives," concluded Assemblymember Garcia.

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The 58th Assembly District includes the cities of Montebello, Pico Rivera, Commerce, Bell Gardens, Downey, Norwalk, Bellflower, Cerritos and Artesia.