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10TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES

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March 7, 2022

Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety  
California Natural Resources Agency  
715 P Street, 20th Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Director Thomas Jacobs,

I write today to raise my opposition to the board's decision<sup>1</sup> allowing Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) to raise electric costs and urge the board to reconsider this decision.

The approval of PG&E's safety certificate allows the utility to put California families on the hook for covering catastrophic wildfire costs. Specifically, it allows PG&E to tap into a multibillion-dollar state wildfire fund, partly funded by California customers. Not only does this decision permit Californians to foot the bill for wildfire costs, it also caps the amount of fire damage that PG&E shareholders are responsible for paying back to the same fund. This decision is unbelievable and reckless.

I understand the need for the board to approve a safety certificate charting a pathway for the utility to make much-needed improvements in its operations. In fact, I support that effort. I also support the work being done each day by PG&E's workers out in the field to make our energy grid safer and more reliable. This is not about any of that. It's about the implications of this safety certificate, which are alarming and set a dangerous precedent of holding ratepayers accountable for wildfire costs rather than the utility and its shareholders. Over the last two decades, PG&E has paid well over \$2.3 billion in penalties and lawsuit settlements<sup>2</sup>. If this certificate had been in place decades ago, only a fraction of that would have been recovered by wildfire victims and PG&E customers. This is an insult to Californians, especially those who have lost a loved one due to the utility's negligence.

Your decision will also impact countless Central Valley families, including low-income households, who will see their utility bills go up by double digits<sup>3</sup>. These families are being forced to choose between freezing in the winter months or barely affording their electric bills. It is inconceivable to imagine the board would make this decision at a time when our state is grappling with soaring inflation prices, driving up the costs of food and energy.

California families have suffered greatly from wildfires – losing their loved ones, their homes, and facing life-threatening climates. The costs of these wildfires have been great. Californians should

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<sup>1</sup> [Energy Safety Statement on Issuance of PG&E Safety Certification](#), *Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety*, Jan 31, 2022

<sup>2</sup> [PG&E Penalties and Settlements Through the Years](#), *Wall Street Journal*, September 5, 2019

<sup>3</sup> [PG&E monthly bills are set to jump again this year, jolting customers](#), *The Mercury News*, Feb 10, 2022

not have to bear the brunt of anymore wildfire costs. As the board tasked with advancing wildfire safety, I urge you to put the lives and needs of Californians before that of a utility company. I look forward to your timely response to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Harder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end of the name.

Josh Harder  
Member of Congress