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Assemblymember Harabedian Introduces Legislation to End Insurance Driven Fire Testing and Establish Science Based Safety Standards

(ALTADENA, CA) — Families returning home after a wildfire should not be forced to gamble with their health. The smoke from fires that blaze through the wildland-urban interface (WUI) has far greater health impacts than smoke from wildfires in remote areas. Yet more than a year after the Eaton and Palisades fires, many residents are still living with uncertainty, fear, and risk because California lacks enforceable standards for post fire home testing.

To confront this failure, Assemblymember Harabedian is introducing legislation to establish statewide science-based standards for post-WUI fire home testing and clearance. The bill requires that decisions returning home are guided by public health, science, and engineering expertise rather than financial incentives or inconsistent private assessments.

“This bill makes one thing clear: when it comes to our families' health we trust science, not insurance company guesswork. AB 1642 will create a statewide scientific standard for when it's safe to return to a home after a wildfire. Public health will be the standard, not the exception,” said **Assemblymember John Harabedian**.

In the absence of statewide rules, life-altering safety decisions have too often been left to insurance companies instead of public health experts. Families are left without consistent guidance or protection while navigating contamination concerns on their own.

"People are exhausted, financially strained, and terrified of harming their families' health, yet not having the insurance support to stay safe and out of their contaminated homes. We need science-based answers that help us come home, and know it's truly safe to do so." said **Jane Lawton Potelle, Executive Director of Eaton Fire Residents United**

"Eaton Fire survivors have suffered incomprehensible loss. As recovery moves forward, the health and safety of families must be non-negotiable. Standing homes must be fully and properly remediated, and soil must be cleaned correctly and thoroughly. When Altadenans come home, they deserve to return to safe homes and neighborhoods, not environments that put their health at risk for years to come." said **Bree Jensen, Vice Chair, Eaton Fire Collaborative**

"Right now, there is no uniform clearance standard for standing homes after a WUI fire—protocols vary, and for many harmful contaminants, the thresholds don't even exist. Clearance Before Occupancy fixes that gap by codifying what must be tested, how it must be tested, and what levels must be met before re-occupancy." said **Wilberta Richardson, Co-Chair EFC Advocacy Committee**

"The lack of clear environmental testing standards for re-occupying fire-impacted buildings has created real health risks and delayed economic recovery—both in California and across the country," said **Andrew Whelton, PhD, Professor of Engineering, Purdue University**. *"California has a clear opportunity to lead the nation by setting health-based standards that speed recovery while protecting public health."*

The bill will be heard in Assembly policy committees during the spring.

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Assemblymember John Harabedian represents the 41st District composed of the cities of La Cañada Flintridge, Pasadena, Altadena, Sierra Madre, Monrovia, Bradbury, San Dimas, La Verne, Claremont, Upland, Rancho Cucamonga, Oak Hills, Piñon Hills and Phelan.