FROM: Climate Justice Advocates
DATE: April 1, 2021
RE: Concerns with SB 5126, Cap and Trade

Dear Honorable State Senators and State Representatives,

We, the undersigned organizations, including share with you a great sense of urgency to address the climate crisis. Many of us were involved in developing a collaborative effort to fund a just transition off fossil fuels, with broad support, a consensus that we fear has been abandoned for the divisive, and less ambitious model of "Cap and Trade" in SB 5126. Previous efforts lost at the ballot after the oil industry invested a historic flood of money to defeat us. But we have not given up. Nor are we running into the arms of the oil industry and their solutions for fear of resistance to equitable and just action on climate. We simply must work harder, together, to identify the bold solutions that will actually work.

Climate justice is an approach to reducing carbon pollution and mitigating climate impacts through environmental justice, environmental health, and economic justice. It means our strategies for addressing climate change must ensure we all do better, with specific focus on doing better by the communities first and worst impacted. We know we have achieved that goal when a policy has broad, consistent support directly from communities most impacted and that takes carbon pollution head-on.

As a revenue strategy, cap and trade is inferior to straightforward taxes. Auction revenue is less consistent and lower than carbon tax proposals waiting in committee. The **increase in taxes consumers pay in cap and trade will not be missed by voters**. Low income drivers will pay the real price, but their costs are not addressed**.** Since polluters can offset their emissions in the private market, there is less public revenue to invest. Perhaps it is not surprising that big oil companies have become big players in the offset market, **British Petroleum, which is backing SB 5126 and bankrolling advocacy,** is one of the **world's biggest carbon-credit traders** and now the largest developer of forest carbon offset credits. In California, more than a **billion dollars have been spent on offsets, not paid to the state, for carbon reduction that was vastly overestimated** and those attempting to fix the offset program are resigning in protest over its failure.

As a carbon reduction strategy, SB 5126 has not met this standard. That is why it is so controversial. While Cap and Trade is supposed to account for nearly half of California's 2030 target, their Department of Environmental Quality found it may **only be responsible for as low as five percent of the reductions outlined in its authorizing legislation**.[1] We can do better than that. The program is going through a deep rethink launched in 2021 to identify why it's not meeting its promise, that won't be complete until 2022. **We should learn from their mistakes before diving in headfirst.**

As an environmental justice approach, SB 5126 is a throwback to a time before justice and people of color were valued as part of the conversation. While using the words "environmental justice," rather than reducing pollution where it's the worst, it relies **on after-the-fact reviews**. Rather than striving for a high standard for clean air and lower emissions everywhere, it promises air just as good as your neighbor community whose air may not be significantly better. Industrial sources of pollution are required to do more reporting than acting on pollution. Washington legislators are using a similar approach to environmental justice as California, which the California Environmental Justice Alliance says "**failed to produce material protections**." Cap and Trade spurred a 15-year fight in California, we don't need that distraction here.

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[1] California's Climate Change Policies: Will the State Achieve the SB 32 Target? OVERSIGHT HEARING OF THE SENATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE, February 20, 2019.

SB 5126 seeks to create a carbon market with shared governance, pollution allowances, and administration with California, but it hasn't met its promise there and a linked carbon market won't benefit Washington. Given the global nature of the problem, the best way to impact climate change is to focus on healthy air and the clean energy economy here at home, which will spur further action. The **Biden administration is seeing clearly, and has moved past this debate to focus more on proven solutions like dedicated investments and strong standards**. Cap and Trade is busy-work in the school of climate justice. It sounds good, but it's not going to help us on the real tests of reducing emissions nor raising consistent revenue.

We know you are under tremendous pressure to do 'something' on climate. That some colleagues you trust on these issues may be telling you cap and trade is OK. **We are writing to tell you it's *not* OK to just go along without listening to environmental justice communities directly**. We believe it is our role to tell our elected leaders what we need, not the other way around. Rather than forcing this top-down policy on frontline communities, let's work together on a consensus approach that everyone pushing for a healthy climate can get behind, together. In fact, we've already done that work and have policy ready to go with that approach. We need you to take action, and know that if you do, we have your back.

Sincerely,

Climate Justice Advocates Concerned by SB 5126, Cap and Trade

As of 4/2/2021 @ 11:00am

Familias Unidas por la Justicia	Community to Community Development – FoodJustice.org	UFCW 21 – a VOICE for working America	Latino Community Fund Washington State	Na'ah Illahee Fund
Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition – Technical Advisory Group	Got Green – Rooted in Power	OneAmerica – With Justice for All	Puget Sound Sage – Growing communities where all families thrive.	Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility
SWCUC – By Comm"UNITY" For Comm"UNITY"	Labor Network for Sustainability	LULAC – 10 Year Anniversary SWWA Council 47013	Washington Interfaith Power & Light – Earth Ministry	Our Climate
350 Seattle	350 Tacoma	Food & Water Action	350 Wenatchee	Young Warrior Society

Puget Sound Advocate Retireme Action	TRANSIT RIDERS UNION	350 Everett	CAGJ Community Alliance for Global Justice	APACE APACE-WA.ORG Cy
UAW 4121	connecting people • sharing knowledge • empowering communities THE NOBLE FOUNDATION	SWCUC By Comm"UNITY" For Comm"UNITY"	CARW COALITION of ANTI RACIST WHITES	WASHINGTON STATE BUDGET &POLICY CENTER
KITSAP ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION PO Box 416, Hansville, WA 98340	350 Yakima	350 SPOKANE	350 eastside	Mason County Climate Justice
TAC	Sunrise Movement Seattle	RISNW	350 Bellingham	