



# COMMUNITY PREVENTION AND POPULATION HEALTH TASK FORCE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

**COMMUNITY PREVENTION AND  
POPULATION HEALTH TASK FORCE**

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**TASK FORCE CO-CHAIRS**

**Manal J. Aboelata, MPH**

**Megan McClaire, MSPH**

September 25, 2017

The Most Reverend José H. Gómez  
Office of the Archbishop of Los Angeles  
3424 Wilshire Boulevard, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Los Angeles, California 90010-2241

"... we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*"

-Pope Francis, Encyclical on the Environment  
June 18, 2015

Dear Archbishop Gómez:

As the LA County Community Prevention and Population Health Task Force, we are writing to ask that you exercise every measure within your power at the helm of the Archdiocese, and as the property owner of herein referred to as 'the site', **to protect the health of the people in the nearby University Park community in South Los Angeles by immediately terminating the lease with the operator of the site; and, in the future refuse to lease to industrial and environmental polluters that pose similar risks to the health of nearby residents.**

We respectfully appeal to your leadership and goodwill because we are deeply concerned about the significant health problems that people living near the site are facing. As you are well aware, the University Park neighborhood surrounding the site is densely populated, and young children, adults and seniors suffer chronically from nose bleeds, asthma and other respiratory problems, itchy and irritated eyes and throats as well as headaches during operation of extraction and related activities. The health data--and lived experiences of local residents--strongly suggest that the chemicals used in the process of extracting oil and gas, as well as those used in the maintenance and routine cleaning of wells and other equipment convey serious health and safety risks. Although chronic upper respiratory and other severe health impacts persist since the cessation of operations in November of 2013, research shows improvement of acute health symptoms when there are no such industrial activities at the site.

The LA County Community Prevention and Population Health Task Force is an external advisory board comprised of 25 public health leaders appointed by the LA County Board of Supervisors. Formed in 2015, the

**Community Prevention and Population Health Task Force Members:**

Sonya Young Aadam · Manal Aboelata · Mayra Alvarez · Tamika Butler · Melinda Cordero-Bárzaga  
Michael Cousineau · Veronica Flores · Michelle Fluke · Cathy Friedman · Mark Glassock  
Nancy Halpern Ibrahim · Mary Lee · Virginia Lee · Joan Ling · Jim Mangia  
Megan McClaire · Denise Miller · Lauren Nakano · Elisa Nicholas  
Ashlee Oh · Luis Pardo · Maryjane Puffer · Margaret Smith  
Rosa Soto · Benjamin Torres

Task Force advises the Board on priority health and safety concerns and provides guidance on primary strategies for improving the health of the population of LA County. As such, we are concerned about both the acute and enduring risks to people's health, safety, well-being and quality of life. It has come to our urgent attention that the oil extraction and related practices proposed to resume at the site represent a significant and *preventable* health risk to some of our most vulnerable populations: low income Latino families, pregnant mothers and people of reproductive age, youth and teens, seniors, people with disabilities and students whose respiratory and reproductive systems need protection from unnecessarily toxic exposures. For this, we are hopeful that we can look to you to intervene in a manner aligning with your values and beliefs to prevent the extraction, operation, maintenance and storage activities that threaten to afflict nearby residents and students.

We are aware that the Archdiocese does many things to uplift the community and to serve faithfully in its best interests. A clear and swift termination of this lease is especially needed because the area around University Park is densely populated with hundreds of families and individuals utilizing day care facilities, schools, and senior and affordable housing, all of whom would be at risk if operations were to resume at the site.

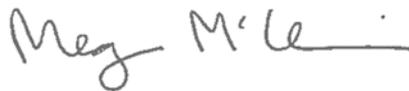
We realize that what we are requesting of you represents a significant stance in affirmation of the health of the people and the environment. As a Countywide group representing the health and safety interests of the residents of LA County, we stand ready to provide you with any clarifying information and support that you may request, and we are also prepared to elevate the actions that we hope you will take to assure the health and well-being of current and future residents of University Park. We are committed to ensuring that no LA County resident, regardless of zip code, race, or income is disproportionately impacted by oil and gas extraction. The termination of the lease would signify a powerful and enduring action that would reverberate for generations to come. We are enthusiastic about the bold leadership you are poised to take on this matter.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Manal J. Aboelata, MPH  
Co-Chair



Megan McClaire, MSPH  
Co-Chair

cc: His Holiness, Pope Francis, Apostolic Palace, 00120, Vatican City

Archdiocese of Los Angeles:

Most Reverend Alexander Salazar, Executive Director, Office of Life, Justice and Peace

Michael Davitt, Director of Real Estate

Andrew Rivas, Director of Governmental and Community Relations

Dr. Barbara Ferrer, Director; LA County Department of Public Health

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