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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 24, 2023

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Air District Board Chair statement opposing the selection of COP28 president with ties to fossil fuel industry

SAN FRANCISCO – Statement by John J. Bauters, Chair of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District Board of Directors:

“I must express my deep concerns about the selection of Sultan Al Jaber as president of the COP28 climate summit. As board chair of the nation’s first and oldest regional air pollution control agency, I will not remain silent about a decision that undermines the very essence of climate leadership, environmental stewardship, and is an affront to the marginalized voices across the globe fighting not only climate change, but in many cases, for their own existence.

The face of COP28 must not be that of an oil company executive. The global discussion that occurs at the COP must be authentic, honest and sincere. A critical gathering of this nature must not be co-opted by the fossil fuel industry interests — the same actors who have externalized the incredible environmental and public health harms that COP28 seeks to rectify.

At the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, we are working to center our communities in everything we do. As a person with privilege, it is morally imperative that my voice be loud and clear: women, black, brown, and indigenous people, children in developing countries, the global youth movement, and lower-income communities that have been historically marginalized and disproportionately impacted by climate change are the voices that must lead us. It is only through their experiences and perspectives that we can truly grasp the urgency of the situation and move toward meaningful, collective action.

I have been a faithful supporter and participant in the COP climate conferences over recent years, presenting in conference sessions at both COP26 in Glasgow, and COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh. Today, I am forced to seriously reconsider my commitment to COP as the appropriate venue and vehicle for making meaningful progress if a change in leadership does not occur. COP28 should not become an opportunity for those who have monetized the environment to undermine climate action by capturing a forum intended for environmental stewardship.

I call on leaders across California to join me in demanding change. Together, we must ensure that COP28 is a beacon of hope and progress, standing firm against the forces that perpetuate harm. Our future, our common human existence, and health of our planet depend on it.”

The [Bay Area Air Quality Management District](#) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area. Connect with the Air District via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

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