

Statement of Dr. Robert Gould (SF Bay PSR), Atherton City Council, November 3, 2021

I'm Dr. Robert Gould. After working as a Pathologist at San Jose Kaiser for over 30 years, since 2012, I've been an Associate Adjunct Professor at UCSF School of Medicine, working in our Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment. Since 1989 I've also been President of San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), for which I'm speaking today, representing hundreds of health professionals throughout our region, who speak for the health of our patients and communities, who are increasingly impacted by the unfolding public and environmental health impacts of global warming, and clearly connected issues of air pollution.

The recently released assessment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is unequivocal in its call for urgent action to ensure an energy efficient and fossil free future. Reducing reliance on gas appliances is health protective, not only in their climate benefits of moving away from fossil fuel extraction and use, but also because gas stoves and other appliances can be a large source of toxic pollution in homes, reaching levels of pollution that would be illegal in outdoor settings. Children, especially those of color, are particularly at risk of respiratory illnesses, such as asthma, associated with gas appliance pollution, and lower income households may be at higher risk of exposure.

So, as one example, a 2013 meta-analysis looking at the association between gas stoves and childhood asthma found children in homes with gas stoves have a 42% increased risk of experiencing asthma symptoms (current asthma), a 24% increased risk of ever being diagnosed with asthma by a doctor (lifetime asthma), and an overall 32% increased risk of both current and lifetime asthma.

In addition, there is mounting evidence linking combustion related air pollution with adverse brain development. A 2009 study found evidence that infant through preschool-age early-life exposure (through age four) to indoor air pollution from gas appliances may be related to impaired cognitive function and may increase the risk of developing attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms.

Accordingly, we strongly support Atherton adopting an all-electric Reach Code now, requiring electric heating and appliances, on-site solar energy, and electric vehicle charging infrastructure in all new residential and commercial construction. As such, you would join many other cities in California who have already adopted electric requirements for new construction that avoid new fossil gas use, in recognition of numerous benefits to community health, safety, and a stable climate future afforded by this transformation.

We call on you to use this critical opportunity to demonstrate Atherton's leadership and commitment to rapidly develop the more economical, pollution-free buildings we need now for the optimal public, environmental and climate health we and future generations so deserve.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Gould, MD; President, San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility