

In the face of the climate crisis and Covid-19 economic and health crisis, we can ill-afford new taxes that fail to produce meaningful results.

Yes, climate change is a massive threat posing disproportionate impacts on the poor and Berkeley must be part of the solution. But this measure will not spend our limited tax dollars effectively towards these ends. The financial suffering of our citizens in the current health and economic disaster only underscores the need to reject this well-intentioned, but badly flawed, measure.

The measure is unlikely to achieve its stated goals for three reasons:

- There is no provision for oversight of distributed funds, and the City is under no obligation to spend according to the stated purposes. A dedicated fund would require a special tax and a two-thirds vote.
- The competing objectives of equity and cost-effectively reducing carbon emissions are at odds, but Measure HH does not include a plan to achieve these divergent objectives and no plan has been presented to City Council. Competing visions are likely to create conflict, inefficiency and compromises that will fritter away funds.
- Entire state agencies are addressing these highly complex issues among myriad existing programs and regulations. The commission to be tasked with making spending recommendations to the City Council is comprised of part-time volunteers. City staff who will be tasked with implementation are already overburdened.

As a city, we should address climate change and promote equity. Our transportation infrastructure is an obvious target. Any additional tax funds could, for example, bolster the city's woefully underfunded "complete streets" budget, which ensures that road repaving will be accompanied by improvements allowing walkers, bicyclists, and people with disabilities to travel safely and inexpensively, while reducing climate and local air pollutants.

Proponents should return with a better plan in better times.

Signatories

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