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Gratiot County Commissioners  
Gratiot County Courthouse  
214 E Center Street  
Ithaca, MI 48847

Dear Gratiot County Commissioners,

I'm writing today to share with you what our family has been through when the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) caught fire, in our community. On Friday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the largest lithium-ion battery plant in the world caught fire and 80% of it burned. The plant housed 125,000 lithium-ion batteries; each battery is about the equivalent of 1 Tesla car battery. The BESS is owned and maintained by the Vistra Corporation, at the PG&E Power Plant, in Moss Landing, California, also home to one of our most cherished and diverse marine sanctuaries along the California coastline. Our county fire fighters were not able to put the fire out. It burned for 3 days, the first time, 1 day the second time, a little over a month later. As part of their agreement to come online, Vistra was supposed to have an emergency plan. According to county records, their emergency plan was "Pending". These are dangerous chemicals and there was no way to extinguish the fire. Water makes this type of chemical fire worse, so it had to just burn out on its own. At one point, our firefighters left the area for their safety. Once the fire went out on its own, it smoldered for almost 2 months, continuing to pollute our environment. The area was so dangerous that no one could go into the building for fear of re-igniting the 125,000 damaged batteries. Still, to this day, over 5 months after the first fire, no one can go inside the building because there is a 50 foot wall, just barely still standing. They are worried if people go inside, they will disturb the wall and it will fall, on the batteries, and re-ignite the fire.

Another interesting piece of information that the BESS corporation probably will not include in their application package is that these batteries are very volatile, and water can cause them to explode. (Back in 2022, the Tesla BESS, also at the Moss Landing plant, caught fire. There was a leak in the roof and water penetrated the battery casings and ignited. We were lucky, this one only burned for a few hours and went out on its own.)

The months of January and February are our rainy season in California. The explosions of the Jan 16 Moss Landing Vistra Fire blew the roof off the building. This left 125,000



damaged lithium-ion batteries exposed to the outside environment. Every time the forecast called for rain, we were traumatized, worried it would re-ignite. About 32 days after the first fire, the Vistra facility caught fire again, on its own. And again, we all just watched it burn, and we all just took in the toxins, while the EPA and Vistra said everything was ok (Vistra and the EPA were lying).

The EPA and Vistra said everything was fine, we simply needed to stay indoors, close doors and windows and not run A/C or heat. The truth was that they did not know what the dangers were, or maybe they did, but they didn't want to admit it. People within a couple miles from the plant were evacuated for a couple of days, however, the evacuation zone should have been much larger. Our farm is in Prunedale, 9 miles East and South of the plant. We watched the fire burn from our back deck when it ignited. We saw the flames blazing hundreds of feet, we saw explosions where flames would get even higher, we now know that these were batteries exploding. We watched the black and green smoke billowing out from the flames. We watched the news, while reporters were standing outside the plant, with the blazing in the background, with no masks. We watched the plume of smoke head North and East. We were worried. We looked at the wind directions for the next 24 hours and the winds were going to shift towards us in the morning. We left for San Francisco the next morning; we could see the smoke and the green haze coming our way. Driving up the SF, we could smell the chemicals. I had a metallic taste in my mouth and a strange vibrating in my body, like my nervous system wasn't right and I had a headache. We returned to our farm on Monday, thinking it would be like a wildfire; we leave for a couple of days, let the air clear out and then return home, maybe clean up some ash or dust. No. Driving down, we could see the smoke/green fog passing through the towns of Gilroy and Hollister. The metallic taste and nausea were returning.

EPA and Vistra said they were monitoring the air quality and that everything was fine. It wasn't fine. The scientists were not testing for the right chemicals, and they were only testing near the plant. Vistra officials said the toxins went up into the atmosphere and dissipated. Where? Into space? No. The dangerous nanoparticles of Lithium, Cobalt, Manganese and Nickel went into the sky very hot and very light and then the wind carried them until they cooled down and dropped, all over the Monterey Bay, mostly around the Prunedale and Aromas Areas.

When we returned home, our symptoms got worse. We stayed for a week, we kept thinking that the chemicals would go away, but they weren't going away.

We were nauseous, coughing, had difficulty concentrating, we had headaches. Our neighbors that were working outside, in their gardens or with animals, had chemical burns on their skin. I would walk up the stairs and have a coughing attack so bad that I couldn't



breathe. I couldn't eat. I was vomiting and my body felt horrible, I felt like my throat was sunburned. I went to the ER, they tried to say I had the flu. This was nothing like the flu. This was a chemical attack on our bodies. After a week, we left our home to stay in an Air B&B in a nearby city. We thought a month would be enough. We were still sick, from our exposures to the chemicals and every time I returned to take care of our animals, my symptoms became worse. We decided we needed to move. We stayed in Air B&B's around the area for 5 months while we purchased and then had some work done on our new home. We found safe and loving homes for the farm animals. During this time, my son had 3 bloody noses (he never had bloody noses before), I've had kidney stones and I had to have an emergency appendectomy.

When we finally moved our household goods into our new home, I began having symptoms again... the toxins were still on our STUFF! We spent the next couple of weeks washing everything, including towels, sheets and clothes, dishes, furniture, pictures, everything, we even replaced our mattresses.

I have a chronic cough, and I still have issues with fatigue and a strange buzzing, or vibrating in my body that tells me my nervous system is having problems. I see a toxicologist, at UCSF now. There aren't many toxicologists that see patients, so it's a drive, but it needs to be done. She is also seeing other people from our area. They can't do anything though, because this has never happened. They are logging our symptoms for the future.

Our family lives a new life now, one that is closer to the water and better air quality, no dangers of a BESS facility exploding nearby, but we are heartbroken about losing our farm and saying goodbye to our animals. All because a \$40B corporation wanted to cut costs. It was, and still is, profit over people.

A few more things I would like to point out...

1. There are only a few studies out there that cover exposure to these types of toxins individually, but there are no studies out there that say what happens when the human body is exposed to all of them at once. We have no idea what the long-term effects are going to be. We, unfortunately, are the guinea pigs.
2. The lithium-ion batteries are not supposed to be charged about 80% or go below 20%. This is because when the batteries are charged to 100%, the outer casing begins to crack. Once this happens, Lithium, Nickel, Cobalt, Manganese and other harmful chemicals are released into the air continuously, no matter the charge on the battery. For Vistra, charging to 80% and going down to only 20% is not cost efficient enough for them. They requested, and received, a waiver to go up and down

an additional 20% when they "needed", allowing them to charge to 100% and then go down to 0%.

3. BESS facilities are going in all over the country without regulation and without the corporations sharing all of the information they know, like what the dangers actually are to our communities. The county and state leaders here in California don't understand the risks, and they are allowing the energy corporations to set their own rules and regulations. The energy corporations only care about profit. When the Vistra BESS caught fire, the only thing we could do is watch it burn, and "hope and pray" that it wouldn't get worse. And it got worse. I was in the Air Force for 11 years, in the intelligence career field. One of my jobs was to study potential courses of action from the enemy. I quickly learned that "hope and pray" is not a course of action. They need real safety regulations.

I'm writing this letter to you as a native Michigander. I was born in Traverse City, my family on both my mom and dad's sides have roots in Central & Northern Michigan going back 4 generations. I take my husband and son back home for vacations during the summers so they can see the beauty and feel how special Michigan is. Please don't allow the energy corporations and polluters to destroy this very special place.

Michigan deserves better. Don't allow them destroy our communities for their own profit. Please, we can all do better than BESS.

Please reach out to me for any additional information.

Sincerely,



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