Carla Crampton - Opening Comments on PG&E's Proposed 2028-2037 Undergrounding Plan - Montclair Hills

To the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety:

I am writing as a resident of Montclair Hills in Oakland to express my concern about PG&E's proposed 2028–2037 undergrounding plan and what it could mean for the safety of our neighborhood.

Living in the Oakland Hills, we are very aware of the threat of wildfire. Our neighborhood is heavily wooded, with homes built along narrow, winding roads and very few ways out. During periods of high winds and dry conditions, it would take very little for a fire to become dangerous very quickly. The possibility of an electrical line sparking a fire is particularly concerning because it is a risk that we have the ability to reduce.

The devastating 1991 Oakland Hills fire is a reminder of just how quickly a wildfire can spread through a neighborhood like ours. Twenty-five people lost their lives, and thousands of homes were destroyed. More than three decades later, we still face many of the same challenges: dense vegetation, strong winds, steep terrain, and limited evacuation routes. We know what can happen here, which makes it even harder to understand why we wouldn't do everything reasonably possible to prevent another tragedy.

What worries me most is not just the possibility of a fire starting, but what would happen if we all needed to evacuate at once. Our roads are simply not designed to handle that kind of emergency. A fallen tree or power line could block a street, leaving residents unable to reach one of the few main roads out of the hills. Add heavy traffic, poor visibility, and a fast-moving fire, and the consequences could be devastating.

The strong winds that move through Shepherd Canyon only make this situation more dangerous. While I understand that PG&E has taken steps to strengthen overhead lines and implement automatic shutoffs, those measures do not eliminate the danger posed by electrical infrastructure running through a heavily wooded, high-fire-risk neighborhood. Undergrounding would address a significant source of that risk rather than simply trying to manage it.

I also find it troubling that PG&E's proposed approach places so much emphasis on cost-benefit calculations when some of the most serious safety concerns, including evacuation difficulties and falling trees, are not fully accounted for in its models. How can a neighborhood be considered a lower priority for undergrounding if the analysis does not adequately reflect what could happen to the people living there during a major wildfire?

I recognize that undergrounding is expensive and that PG&E must make decisions about where to invest. But those decisions need to reflect the actual risks residents face, especially in communities like ours where the combination of wind, vegetation, overhead lines, and limited evacuation access creates such a dangerous situation.

I urge the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety to require PG&E to fully evaluate these combined risks and give serious consideration to undergrounding throughout Montclair Hills, including the smaller residential streets that connect to our evacuation routes.

We have already seen what a catastrophic wildfire can do to the Oakland Hills. We should be using that experience to prevent another tragedy, not waiting until it happens again. Protecting lives should carry far more weight than a financial model that may not capture the true consequences.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,

Carla Crampton Montclair Hills, Oakland, California