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July 18, 2025

The Honorable Buffy Wicks, Chair
Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8140
Sacramento, CA 958149

Subject: Senate Bill 80 (Caballero et al) – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Wicks,

On behalf of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), I am writing to express our enthusiastic support for Senate Bill 80: *The Fusion Research and Development Innovation Hub Program*. SB 80, authored by Assemblywoman Petrie-Norris and Senators McNerney and Blakespear, would establish a fusion energy research hub within the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development aka "GO-Biz," and set a goal of delivering the first-of-its-kind fusion energy pilot plant within California by 2040.

As the largest local chamber on the West coast, representing over 2,000 members and over 300,000 jobs, we understand the potential of fusion energy as a clean, abundant, and waste-free source of energy and the many economic benefits of California's position at the forefront of fusion energy development, thanks to San Diego-based companies like General Atomics. Nuclear fusion is the process that powers the sun. When successfully commercialized, fusion will provide nearly limitless clean, safe, and reliable energy that can be utilized for dispatchable baseload electricity without producing air pollution or harmful emissions. Further, because fusion is a fundamentally different process than fission, which powers all of today's nuclear power plants, it cannot result in a thermal-runaway scenario and does not produce long-lasting nuclear waste.

California uses more electricity every year, especially as the state transitions to more electrified buildings and vehicles, adding more load to the grid. As we work on solutions to expand our energy grid, we must also invest in the exploration of affordable clean energy alternatives. While experimental fusion has been demonstrated, we must fund further research on commercial reactors to bring fusion energy to market in the next couple of decades. Fusion primarily uses isotopes of hydrogen, which can be extracted from water and lithium. Last year, the Chamber was proud to support Senator Padilla's Lithium Battery Production Council legislation (SB 1309), which was passed through your committee, as Southern California's Salton Sea has one of the largest reserves of lithium on earth. Much like SB 1309, SB 80 has the potential to create thousands of jobs, new economic opportunities throughout California, and decrease the state's reliance on foreign energy imports.

The United States has maintained a robust fusion research program for decades, with the two largest fusion research programs located in California: the DIII-D National Fusion Facility in San Diego and the National Ignition Facility in Livermore. Our state also leads the nation in fusion academic research

programs, attracting over \$2 billion in venture capital as a part of a global \$8 billion investment. While the payoff will not be immediate, SB 80 will create a framework for the state to facilitate research and development that would close remaining technological gaps to make fusion a reality and foster a robust science, industry, and workforce.

For these reasons, the Chamber supports SB 80 and urges its passage in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Justine Murray, Executive Director of Public Affairs, at jmurray@sdchamber.org. Thank you for your attention to this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cate", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chris Cate
President & CEO
San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce