The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
California Attorney General  
1300 “I” Street  
Sacramento, California 95814  

Dear Attorney General Becerra:

Thank you for your commitment to protecting the environment and public health, particularly in our communities that are economically struggling and impacted by pollution.

We, the undersigned, write to urge you to launch an investigation into whether fossil fuel companies, and specifically Exxon Mobil Corporation, internally acknowledged the scientific reality of climate change -- while at the same time misleading the public and its shareholders about climate risks. We are part of a grassroots campaign in California, the “Exxon Mobil Accountability Campaign,” created specifically to urge you to take action on this important issue. In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey's devastating consequences in Texas -- indisputably made worse by climate change -- this request could not be more timely or urgent.

Exxon Mobil is a leading producer and marketer of fossil fuels. A mounting body of public evidence has demonstrated that Exxon Mobil has not accurately informed the public, policymakers, or its shareholders about the serious climate change risks associated with the company, its products, and its investments. These potentially deceptive practices were carried out not only through the company’s own statements, but through its funding of organizations that have distorted the facts about climate change. There is compelling evidence that Exxon Mobil knew of the many risks of climate change and how these risks influenced their own economic future. Instead of acting responsibly, it spent years distorting the truth. The people of California deserve better.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) declared last year to be the hottest in recorded history. NASA reports that July 2017 was the hottest July on record. Climate change disproportionately affects low-income communities and the problems are only getting worse.

A new study by Dr. Naomi Oreskes and Dr. Geoffrey Suprans of Harvard, revealed how Exxon Mobil downplayed climate change while its own science reported how serious the problem had become (see: Environmental Research Letters, August 22, 2017). This is the first ever peer-reviewed analysis of Exxon Mobil’s 40-year history of climate change communications. The study found systematic discrepancies between what the company said about climate change privately and in academic circles, and what it said to the public. For instance, the study found that roughly 80% of Exxon Mobil’s peer-reviewed science and internal memos acknowledged that climate change is real and human caused. Yet essentially the same fraction of Exxon Mobil’s paid ads in the "New York Times" -- 81% -- promoted doubt on the matter.

We urge you to promptly serve a Civil Investigative Demand on Exxon Mobil and launch an investigation into its practices -- in light of applicable consumer and investor protection laws.
We also request an opportunity to meet with you to discuss this pressing matter. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Eddie Kurtz
Executive Director, Courage Campaign