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U.S. Department of Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service  
CC:PA:LPD:PR (REG-117631-23)  
Room 5203  
P.O. Box 7604  
Ben Franklin Station  
Washington, DC 20044

**RE: Comments on proposed regulations (REG-117631-23) for the Section 45 Clean Hydrogen Production Credit**

To whom it may concern:

The American Exploration & Production Council (AXPC), the Gas and Oil Association of West Virginia (GO-WV), the Marcellus Shale Coalition (MSC), and the Ohio Oil and Gas Association (OOGA) respectfully submit comments on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking relating to the clean hydrogen production credit in Internal Revenue Code Section 45V (REG-117631-23, “**proposed regulations**”) published by the Department of the Treasury (“**Treasury**”) and the Internal Revenue Service (“**IRS**”).<sup>1</sup> These rules are essential to ensuring that the Companies we represent have the certainty they need to expand their decarbonization investments and their role in the hydrogen economy. However, our organizations are concerned that the rules contain limitations and restrictions that are inconsistent with the Inflation Reduction Act and will threaten the Biden administration’s efforts to support the growth of America’s clean hydrogen industry, which is necessary to achieve needed, substantial emissions reductions from critical industrial sectors.

AXPC is the national trade association that represents 34 of the leading independent oil and natural gas exploration and production companies in the United States. GO-WV is a non-profit corporation that represents 500 member companies and is working to promote and protect all aspects of the oil and natural gas industry in West Virginia. The MSC works with exploration and production, midstream, and supply chain partners in the Appalachian Basin and across the country to address issues regarding the production of clean, job-creating, American natural gas from the Marcellus and Utica Shale plays. OOGA is a trade association with members representing the people and companies directly responsible for the production of crude oil, natural gas, and associated products in Ohio. Our organizations appreciate the opportunity to jointly file comments on the proposed regulations.

The following critical changes to the proposed regulations are needed so that the lifecycle greenhouse gas (“**GHG**”) emissions rate calculated for a particular producer gives credit to carbon intensity (“**CI**”) reduction efforts within the well-to-gate framework of the statute.

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<sup>1</sup> 88 Fed. Reg. 89220 (Dec. 26, 2023).

**1. Treasury/IRS Should Allow Producers to Use Actual Upstream Methane Loss Rates in the Calculation of Well-to-Gate GHG Emissions of the Hydrogen Produced.**

The proposed regulations direct producers to calculate their well-to-gate GHG emissions for purposes of determining eligibility for the Section 45V credit using the most recent Greenhouse gases, Regulated Emissions, and Energy use in Transportation model (“**REET Model**” or “**45VH<sub>2</sub>-REET**”). However, one of the fixed assumptions (also referred to as background data) in the REET Model is the upstream methane loss rate. This is the rate at which methane (CH<sub>4</sub>, which is the primary component of natural gas) is lost between when it comes out of a well and when it reaches the hydrogen production facility.

Treating this rate as background data means that it only varies based on the hydrogen production pathway and feedstock selected. The variable reflects the national average methane loss rate across all producers in that category, regardless of the location or other factors impacting the carbon intensity of the feedstock (i.e. regionality) or the specific emissions reduction measures a producer may have taken to minimize its actual methane leakage rate to produce responsibly sourced gas (“**RSG**”).<sup>2</sup> Currently, the background assumption in the REET model for this variable is 0.9 percent (0.9%) per MMBTu<sup>3</sup>. However, many clean hydrogen producers have reduced their upstream methane leakage rates down to a fraction of that assumed number.

Producers are meticulously tracking upstream methane loss rates. They do this not just because they are committed to reducing GHG emissions and the impact of our clean hydrogen production on the environment, but because the US Environmental Protection Agency (“**EPA**”) also requires this information. Under strict data collection standards set forth by the EPA, the actual methane lost is measured between when it leaves the well and when it arrives at the hydrogen production facility and that information is reported to the EPA on an annual basis. Producers attest to the accuracy of that number under penalty of perjury, and the data is readily auditable by a third party.

In the preamble to the proposed regulations, Treasury and the IRS asked for comment on the “readiness of verification mechanisms that could be utilized for certain background data in 45VH<sub>2</sub>-REET if it were reverted to foreground data in future releases.” The upstream methane loss rate is a data point that can be readily verified to the hundredth of a percentage point today with industry-leading mechanisms that withstand the scrutiny of the EPA and third-party auditors. **AXPC, GO-WV, MSC, and OOGA respectfully request that the final regulations allow each producer to use its individualized data points—and not the average background assumption in the REET Model—to calculate its actual well-to-gate emissions for purposes of Section 45V.**

While we expect that some future version of the REET Model might revert the upstream methane loss rate to foreground data, clean hydrogen producers need the final regulations to support calculations that incorporate the actual data for this variable now. This is necessary to ensure that RSG may serve as a

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<sup>2</sup> RSG is natural gas that has been produced responsibly with a low carbon intensity, measured, and verified using credible informed standards. This high-fidelity data is reported by producers to the EPA and verified by independent third parties, such as the MiQ Certification program, which has been operational for 3+ years and now certifies over 20% of US production.

<sup>3</sup> As noted in Section 2.4.2 of the U.S. Department of Energy’s Guidelines to Determine Well-to-Gate Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Hydrogen Production Pathways using 45VH<sub>2</sub>-REET 2023, the methane rate of 0.9% is derived from the Updated Natural Gas Pathways in REET 2022 published by Argonne National Laboratory in October 2022. See Table 4 which reflects 206.6 grams of CH<sub>4</sub> per MMBTu, or 0.9% (1MMBTu = 22,380.5 grams).

feedstock for clean hydrogen and enable it to qualify for the maximum available Section 45V credit if the thresholds are met.

Some of our member companies produce what's commonly referred to as blue hydrogen, which in our case pairs methane reforming (often using steam) of responsibly sourced natural gas with carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration. Further, many of our members are investing tens of millions of dollars to minimize CI throughout their processes, achieving a level of GHG emissions that would clearly qualify them for the maximum Section 45V credit. However, because the proposed regulations require the use of the GREET Model and the Treasury has proposed to lock the upstream methane loss rate as a default "background" value, they will no longer be eligible for the full Section 45V credit. Such a rule undermines the investments our members are making to reduce emissions and is inconsistent with the policy behind the provision, which was designed to reduce the costs of all qualifying clean hydrogen to fuel the energy transition.

In the alternative, we ask you to determine that clean hydrogen produced from RSG feedstock is distinct from the hydrogen production pathways utilizing natural gas that already are included in the most recent GREET model and expressly confirm that producers utilizing RSG feedstock are able to petition the Secretary for a provisional emissions rate ("PER") determination that takes into account the upstream methane loss rate reflected in their EPA-certified data. Expanding access to the PER process in this way could serve as an interim measure, only until DOE updates 45VH<sub>2</sub>-GREET to make the upstream methane loss rate "foreground data."

## **2. Use of Waste Hydrogen to Power Production of Hydrogen and Co-Products Is a Qualified Use.**

The proposed Regulations include an anti-abuse provision that "the section 45V credit is not allowable if the primary purpose of the production and sale or use of qualified clean hydrogen is to obtain the benefit of the section 45V credit in a manner that is wasteful, such as the production of qualified clean hydrogen that the taxpayer knows or has reason to know will be vented, flared, or used to produce hydrogen".<sup>4</sup> There are times when this anti-abuse rule should not apply, such as when a facility utilizes some of the qualified clean hydrogen, which otherwise would be emitted as waste gas, to power components of its facility to create process efficiencies and lifecycle emission reductions.

It would be wasteful to not utilize waste heat and fuel (which may contain hydrogen) to power the on-site operations of the hydrogen production facility. Such facility configurations are designed specifically to create efficiencies across the value chain and eliminate the wasteful production of hydrogen and emissions of carbon oxides, including for the qualified clean hydrogen at the facility. **AXPC, GO-WV, MSC, and OOGA request that the Treasury and the IRS confirm that the production of qualified clean hydrogen which ends up in process waste streams that would otherwise be vented to the atmosphere that is used for generating power on-site when it creates efficiencies and eliminates emissions is an acceptable use under Section 45V(c)(2)(B)(i)(III).**

## **3. The Final Rule Should Utilize Energy-Based Accounting.**

In response to Treasury's request for comment on alternative co-product accounting methods (e.g., mass allocation vs. energy allocation, etc.) that can better represent the CI of the qualified clean hydrogen, our members currently use energy allocation. Hydrogen's energy content by mass is disproportionately high compared to other fuels, so allocation on a mass basis is improper. Our members would not produce or

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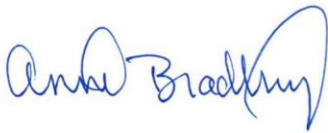
<sup>4</sup> See Proposed Regulation Section 1.45V-2(b)(1); see also 88 Fed. Reg. 89234 (describing the proposed anti-abuse rule in the preamble).

sell hydrogen for its mass. Normalizing CI by mass-based accounting methods would result in a disproportionately small denominator, increasing CI of a product mathematically but not practically. **Therefore, the GREET guidelines should recognize methods such as energy allocation for accounting that do not artificially skew CI, even with regards to co-products, to better ensure the accurate representation of the well-to-gate GHG emissions of hydrogen production.**

#### 4. Conclusion

Congress did not intend for 45V to exclude qualified clean hydrogen produced from natural gas, or any other feedstock, from qualifying for the maximum credit, if the lifecycle GHG emissions rates satisfied the statutory thresholds. Absent change making the upstream methane loss rate “foreground” data in the 45VH<sub>2</sub> GREET, these rules will dissuade clean hydrogen producers who intend to utilize RSG feedstock with carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration from investing in clean hydrogen projects. **AXPC, GO-WV, MSC, and OOGA respectfully request that Treasury and the IRS issue final regulations for Section 45V that embrace a lifecycle GHG emissions calculation that is technology-neutral and does not discriminate against any feedstock or production process, if the hydrogen production facility meets the performance-based lifecycle GHG emission rates established in 45V as evidenced by verifiable and certified data based on the best available science.** Clean hydrogen producers who invest in equipment and processes that reduce carbon emissions below GREET Model default values should be rewarded for their efforts, not excluded from benefiting from the full credit.

Respectfully submitted,



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