



July 21, 2026

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20460

Yana Garcia
Secretary for Environmental Protection
California Environmental Protection Agency
1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

Karen Morrison
Director
California Department of Pesticide Regulation
1001 I Street, P.O. Box 4015, Sacramento, CA 95812-4015

Dr. Erica Pan, MD, MPH
Director and State Public Health Officer
California Department of Public Health
P.O. Box 997377, MS 0500, Sacramento, CA 95899-7377

Re: Request for Joint Investigation into the Pediatric Cancer Cluster in Ladera Ranch, California

Dear Administrator Zeldin, Secretary Garcia, Director Morrison, and Dr. Pan:

We write as state legislators representing Ladera Ranch and the surrounding South Orange County communities to request a thorough and immediate investigation into the cluster of pediatric cancer cases affecting children in the Ladera Ranch community.

Since 2013, at least six adolescents connected to Ladera Ranch have been diagnosed with Ewing sarcoma, a bone and soft-tissue cancer so rare that it affects only 200 to 240 children and teens nationwide each year. Families have also come forward with additional diagnoses of other rare cancers, including synovial sarcoma, bringing the total number of reported cases to roughly a dozen in this small community. Seventeen-year-old Brody Matteson passed away in March of this year from complications of his treatment for Ewing sarcoma. After his death, his mother began asking other local families whether they'd experienced anything similar, and that is largely how the scope of this cluster became clear.

Residents have raised concerns about the volume of pesticide and herbicide applications across Ladera Ranch's roughly 4,000 acres of community-maintained landscape, including reports of frequent overlapping applications. While no causal link between these applications and the reported cancer cases has yet been established, the concentration of a statistically improbable number of rare cancer diagnoses in a single planned community warrants a rigorous, science-based review of all plausible environmental exposures, including but not limited to pesticide and herbicide use as well as soil and water contamination.

First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bilal A. Essayli requested an EPA investigation on July 17, 2026, and we are writing to add our support to that request and to ask that other state and federal authorities coordinate closely with one another, as well as with the Orange County Health Care Agency, the Orange County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, and the UCI Cancer Center, all of which have already begun reviewing available data.

We have been engaging directly with state and local agencies since these reports emerged, and we agree that the families of Ladera Ranch deserve answers from a thorough investigation by health and environmental agencies.

We respectfully request that your agencies:

1. Conduct a joint review of environmental exposure pathways in Ladera Ranch, including pesticide and herbicide application records, soil and water quality;
2. Coordinate with the California Cancer Registry and Orange County Health Care Agency to complete and publicly release an updated epidemiological review of cancer incidence in the community;
3. Give affected families and the broader Ladera Ranch community a clear, public timeline for this investigation and its findings; and
4. Determine whether current landscape management practices in the community comply with federal and state environmental and pesticide-safety law.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We're ready to assist in any way that helps move this investigation forward for the families of Ladera Ranch and the greater Orange County area.

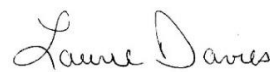
Sincerely,



Kate Sanchez
Assemblymember, District 71



Diane Dixon
Assemblymember, District 72



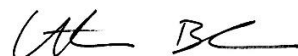
Laurie Davies
Assemblymember, District 74



Tony Strickland
Senator, District 36



Dr. Steven Choi
Senator, District 37



Catherine Blakespear
Senator, District 38

cc:

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dr. Erica Schwartz, Director-Nominee, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, Director, National Institutes of Health

Dr. Regina Chinsio-Kwong, DO, County Health Officer, Orange County Health Care Agency

Bilal A. Essayli, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, Central District of California