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Assembly California Legislature



ROB BONTA
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, EIGHTEENTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
CHAIR: PUBLIC EMPLOYEES,
RETIREMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY
APPROPRIATIONS
BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 1 ON
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET
JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

SELECT COMMITTEES
CO-CHAIR: STATUS OF BOYS AND MEN
OF COLOR

March 28, 2016

Assemblymember Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee

Assemblymember Richard Bloom
Chair, Assembly Budget Sub-3 Committee

RE: Funding for Environmental Justice Small Grants Program in the FY 2016-17 Budget

Dear Chair Ting and Chair Bloom,

I write to respectfully request \$5 million in the 2016-2017 State Budget for the Environmental Justice Small Grants Program within the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA). This important program exists to fund community groups working to address the disproportionate burden of pollution and other environmental issues in low-income communities and communities of color.

As you may be aware, under the current structure of the program there are no permanent funding sources for it. The existing practice is for the Assistant Secretary for Environmental Justice to annually solicit contributions to the program from Boards, Departments and Offices within CalEPA. This is an unreliable, inefficient and unsustainable source of funding for the program. Since finalizing regulations for it in 2004, the grant program has only dispersed funds in 6 different years. The program regularly receives twice as many applications as it can fund, clearly demonstrating its need.

The funding can come from a range of accounts within CalEPA, as it has historically, including the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, the CalEPA General Fund, the Air Pollution Control Fund, the Waste Discharge Permit Fund, and the Department of Pesticide Regulation Mill Fee. CalEPA needs direct authorization and a budget allocation to make small contributions from these accounts to the Environmental Justice Small Grant program. CalEPA's most recent Request for Proposals included a focus on addressing climate change impacts in disadvantaged communities, making it a clear fit for Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds.

This is one of the only grant programs in the state that is directly available to community-based organizations that can fund a wide range of environmental justice projects needed throughout the state. Across California, communities are working to address environmental issues such as increasing access to clean drinking water, cleaning up abandoned toxic sites, and reducing high asthma rates among youth.

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RE: Funding for Environmental Justice Small Grants Program within CalEPA in the FY 2016-17

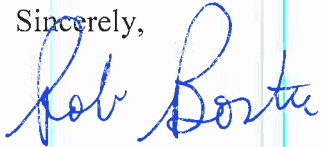
Budget

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According to CalEPA's CalEnviroScreen2.0 tool, approximately 20% of Californians live in communities that face a high burden of public health issues, environmental exposures, and socioeconomic stressors. Additionally, the CalEnviroScreen2.0 results state, "Hispanic/Latinos and African Americans disproportionately reside in highly impacted communities while other groups tend to reside disproportionately in less impacted communities." This additional funding is essential for our most vulnerable communities of color to empower them with the tools they need to fight against environmental health hazards in their communities.

I look forward to working with you on this request and thank you for your consideration. Should you or your staff have any questions regarding this request, please feel free to contact my Legislative Director, Evan Corder, at (916) 319-2018 or Evan.Corder@asm.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



ROB BONTA

Assemblymember, 18th District