



Transforming underserved communities through climate investments **Assemblywoman Autumn R. Burke**

What are the best investments California can make to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while getting resources into underserved communities on the frontlines of pollution and climate change?

We have a new opportunity with my bill, AB 2722, to create a new “Transformative Climate Communities” program which would address the question can climate change and middle class job growth co-exist. It would entail deep investments in integrated climate plans in disadvantaged communities across California. Funded at \$140 million through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, it would ensure California is making comprehensive investments that achieve multiple greenhouse gas reduction, public health and economic benefits in our state’s most vulnerable communities.

This is the exact kind of investment my district needs. The 62nd district is intersected by major freeways, bounded by the Los Angeles International Airport, and home to many industrial facilities resulting in multiple neighborhoods that are significantly impacted. We’ve got a combination of high asthma, poverty and unemployment rates. We need to be bold and act, we need to invest in disadvantaged communities now.

In order to truly see equity in all communities we need a new type of program that funds a suite of integrated projects. We must simultaneously green our community, enhance affordable low-carbon transit options, and help residents make their homes and apartments more energy efficient while training those in disadvantage communities with the skills needed for a career in this growing sector. We need to see a large-scale, focused investment that can bridge the green divide and bring the economic and environmental benefits of renewable energy into communities like Inglewood, Hawthorne, Lennox, and West Athens.

These kinds of projects are an opportunity to create good-paying jobs for residents. We cannot address climate change without grappling with the economic realities that so many working class residents face, and working to create and maintain long-term, healthy and living wage jobs.

Meeting all of these goals in a comprehensive way is the vision behind AB 2722, the Transformative Climate Communities program. The program would be run by the Strategic Growth Council and would award competitive, large-scale grants to neighborhoods in the millions of dollars. It would fund multi-stakeholder collaboratives, bringing together community groups, local agencies, community development institutions, workforce investment boards, and labor to engage in joint planning and implementation for climate sustainability and equity.

No one source of funding can be relied upon to achieve the kind of change we want to see, so the program is designed to leverage private-sector and philanthropic funding. It is also designed to break out of the project-specific silos that have characterized many of the climate programs. It would help cities and local jurisdictions accelerate sustainability plans and help California meet our ambitious climate change goals.

In this legislative session, we’ve already passed historic climate change bills. Now we have AB 2722 to complete the package for equitable, comprehensive climate policy so our state can continue to be a strong

leader in the fight against climate change, reducing pollution, and ensuring that we leave no community behind.

This is the future of not only climate planning, but all land-use planning in California: environmentally friendly and resilient; economically and socially just; integrated and holistic. Let's step into this future today. AB 2722 now heads to the Governor Brown's desk and we need the Transformative Climate Communities program to become reality today.