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GREENLINING.ORG

March 19, 2019

The Honorable Assemblymember Chris Holden, Chair
Assembly Utilities and Energy Committee
California State Capitol, Rm. 5132
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Support for AB 961

Dear Chair Holden,

The Greenlining Institute is proud to support and sponsor AB 961. Founded in 1993, The Greenlining Institute is an Oakland-based policy, research, organizing, and leadership institute working for racial and economic justice.

Greenlining sees AB 961 as a vital energy equity policy that will benefit low-income and communities of color in California. AB 961 would adopt a recommendation in the California Energy Commission's unanimously adopted *SB 350 Low-Income Barriers Study* to establish common definitions of "non-energy benefits" (NEBs) or social implications of clean energy programs, develop standards to measure them, and prioritize projects that promote them in Environmental Justice Communities (EJCs).

In California, most low-income families spend a greater share of their incomes paying energy bills. For example, in 2016, the average energy burden for low-income Californians was three times the amount of higher-income households. This reflects the disproportionate access to energy, which has led to severe levels of energy insecurity – the uncertainty about one's ability to pay for essential energy needs – in EJCs. Households that face energy insecurity in EJCs are thus forced to choose between paying the energy bill to survive rather than purchasing food or medicine.

AB 961 will help California's incredible clean energy programs better serve EJCs and all ratepayers by ensuring that NEB factors such as reduced energy shutoffs, lower energy costs, workforce development, improved air quality and fire safety, and overall energy security are all taken into consideration by the CPUC during their analysis of targeted clean energy programs. Failure to consider NEBs in cost-effectiveness analyses devalues some of the most vital factors to sustaining communities and justifying clean energy investments.

For these reasons, Greenlining is pleased to support and sponsor AB 961. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at madelines@greenlining.org.

Sincerely,

Madeline Stano
Energy Equity Legal Counsel
The Greenlining Institute