



360 14TH STREET, 2ND FLOOR
OAKLAND, CA 94612
GREENLINING.ORG

Governor Gavin Newsom
Senate President *pro tem* Toni Atkins
Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814
By email

RE: Restarting Our Economy by Building the Resilience and Prosperity of California's Most Vulnerable

Dear Governor Newsom, Speaker Rendon, President *pro tem* Atkins:

Addressing the immediate impacts of COVID-19 is rightfully the main focus of our state's response. In time, however, we must address the health, economic, and social fallout of this global pandemic and dedicate significant resources towards rebooting our economy and society. In doing so we have a responsibility to prioritize the needs of the most impacted and least equipped communities to bounce back on their own. Priority populations include people who are most vulnerable to and disproportionately impacted by the cumulative effects of pollution, climate change, and other environmental, public health and economic burdens. Priority communities are those that experience continuing injustice—including people of color, immigrants, people with lower incomes, those in rural areas, and indigenous people—due to a legacy of systemic, largely racialized, inequity that influences their living and working places, the quality of their air and water, and their economic opportunities. Priority populations were already suffering from policy decisions that locked in pollution and environmental hazards where they live and that are now facing dire COVID-19 health outcomes directly linked to environmental racism and redlining deserve our utmost attention.

We request that the following strategies are included in any funding or regulatory proposals meant to address the fallout from COVID-19. We also strongly encourage our elected leaders to adopt equity and the "5 Principles for Just COVID-19 Relief and Stimulus" put forward by over 300 environmental, justice, labor, and movement organizations in our state's response: (1) Health is the top priority, for all people, with no exceptions; (2) Provide economic relief directly to the people; (3) Rescue workers and communities, not corporate executives; (4) Make a down payment on a regenerative economy, while preventing future crises; and, (5) Protect our democratic process while protecting each other.¹

At Greenlining we have always stressed that racial equity is not only a commitment, it must also be a practice. Now more than ever we have to embrace equity, ensuring that those experiencing the most hurt feel the most care. We must also practice equity, turning our commitment into actionable equity strategies in our immediate response to the crisis, in our recovery efforts, and as we reshape our economy.

¹ The People's Bailout Five Principles for Just COVID-19 Relief and Stimulus. <https://thepeoplesbailout.org/>

RACIAL EQUITY STRATEGIES FOR FUNDING & REGULATORY PROPOSALS
ADDRESSING COVID-19 IMPACTS

I. MAKE RACIAL EQUITY REAL

- Require the collection and reporting of COVID-19 cases and treatment by race, income, age, gender and geography.
- Ensure meaningful input and accountability from priority communities.
- Repeal Proposition 209 - Support ACA 5 (Weber and Gipson)
- Establish a statewide Office of Racial Equity responsible for ending systematic disparities in California.
- Investments in priority communities must follow equity principles.

II. EASE THE ECONOMIC BURDEN ON PRIORITY COMMUNITIES AND FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

- Provide assistance to homeowners and renters, which will also prevent increased emissions caused by displacement.
- Fund affordable and reliable transit.

III. DELIVER PROSPERITY AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY TO PRIORITY COMMUNITIES

- Deploy resources to electrify all buildings and transportation.
- Explore establishing a jobs guarantee in California.
- Deploy the massive purchasing power of the state government to create markets for California-made sustainable products.
- Expand public and employee ownership.

IV. BUILD THE RESILIENCE OF PRIORITY POPULATIONS FOR A RESILIENT CALIFORNIA

- Collaborate with priority communities to develop and pass legislation to pursue a no less than \$10 billion bond measure to help the state recover from COVID-19 and build long-term resilience to climate change.
- Support AB 2577 (Chiu) - regional mapping platform to identify vulnerable populations.
- Fund missing strategies that build the resilience of priority populations.
- Do not delay or weaken standards that protect public health, air and climate.
- Expedite access to full scope medi-cal for elders (65+) regardless of immigration status.
- Prioritize emergency funding & resources for primary care clinics & community health centers.
- Expand access to free telehealth & internet services for low-income families.

I. MAKE RACIAL EQUITY REAL

Now more than ever we have to embrace racial equity, which means transforming the behaviors, institutions, and systems that disproportionately harm marginalized communities by increasing access to power, redistributing and providing additional resources, and eliminating barriers to opportunity, in order to empower low-income communities of color to thrive and reach their full potential.

We must also practice equity, turning our commitment into actionable equity strategies in our immediate response to the crisis, in our recovery efforts, and as the world reshapes the global economy. We have to make equity real.

- Require the collection and reporting of COVID-19 cases and treatment by race, income, age, gender and geography.
 - Target resources to the populations and communities most impacted by COVID-19. Take into account the systematic and historic burdens placed on these communities that exacerbated their exposure to this disease and increased the damage to their health and economic wellbeing.
- Ensure meaningful input and accountability from priority communities.
 - Establish a council made up of leaders from priority communities that reports directly to the Governor, Senate Pro Tem, and the Speaker of the Assembly. The council will share information on the COVID-19 recovery needs in priority communities as well as concepts for community led transformation. The council can also help ensure policy and regulatory implementation is accountable to California's commitment to equity.
- Repeal Proposition 209 - Support ACA 5 (Weber)
 - An antiquated law passed under Republican Governor Pete Wilson, Proposition 209 has prevented equal opportunity programs in public contracting, public employment and public education. It's time for us to join the rest of the nation, deliver on our promise of equal opportunity for all, renounce discrimination in all forms, and repeal Proposition 209. We strongly support ACA 5 authored by Assemblymember Shirley Weber and Assemblymember Mike A. Gipson.
- Establish a statewide Office of Racial Equity responsible for ending systematic disparities in California.
 - The Office of Racial Equity would identify existing policies and practices in the state that contribute to, uphold, or exacerbate racial disparities. It would also enact measures to support capacity building and provide technical assistance for state agencies to invest in strategies for racial equity, including employee training and support, development of racial equity programming, and assistance to departments to change departmental policies and practices to improve racial equity outcomes.
- Investments in priority communities must follow equity principles:
 - Investments must be targeted to priority communities, delivering real benefits to Californians who live closest to and are most socioeconomically vulnerable to pollution and climate change. California set minimum investment thresholds (35%) in priority communities established by SB 535 (De León, 2012) and AB 1550 (Gomez, 2016) that should now increase to address the devastating impacts of COVID-19, particularly in latinx and black communities.
 - Investments must be community-driven.

- Investments must significantly address the needs of priority communities and maximize benefits.
- Investments must avoid burdens. In a COVID-19 world, we cannot afford to make investments that are harmful to priority communities who are already experiencing significant socioeconomic, environmental and health burdens.
- Investments must be multi-sectoral to achieve transformation.
- Investments must operationalize equity by:
 - Embedding equity in the mission, vision, and values of investment programs;
 - Building equity into the program’s process;
 - Ensuring equity outcomes via implementation; and
 - Measuring and analyzing for equity.

II. EASE THE ECONOMIC BURDEN ON LOW-INCOME FAMILIES AND FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

Low-income families are already experiencing devastating economic impacts from COVID-19. These same families were already feeling the impact of unemployment, housing vulnerability and food insecurity now find themselves in an even more perilous situation.

Funding and quickly deploying programs that can help ease the economic burden and create safer living environments for these families must be a priority. California already operates multiple cost-saving and climate-helping programs that can meet this challenge but more is needed. We should focus on easing the financial and environmental impact that the transportation and housing sectors have on low-income families. Housing and transportation are the two largest household expenses and among low-income families they account for more than half of their income. Moreover, emissions from the transportation sector represent the largest source of greenhouse gases and air pollution. These emissions could potentially increase if renters and homeowners are displaced due to a lack of income resulting from the COVID-19 crisis and are forced to move to communities that are further away from their jobs and social networks.

Keeping people in their homes is not only the best strategy to combat COVID-19, it is also a good strategy to fight climate change. To achieve this goal California must quickly prioritize emergency housing assistance to renters and homeowners. Once the pandemic shows signs of slowing down and people are able to safely use trains and buses again, we must do everything in our power to support transit agencies by encouraging increased ridership. Improved operations and fare-free service will be a strong incentive to regain transit riders. This will help people bounce back economically and help move us towards a less polluted environment.

- Provide assistance to homeowners and renters, which will also prevent increased emissions caused by displacement.
 - Rent forgiveness and mortgage suspension. To the maximum extent possible, the state should work with financial institutions to continue suspending mortgage payments for homeowners and landlords, and pursue options to forgive rent obligations for the duration of the crisis, including a recovery period after the state of emergency is lifted. Economic relief and displacement protections should not be limited to property owners

– the state must also prioritize the tenants who are at grave risk of losing their homes with rent forgiveness. In addition to the suspension of mortgage payments, the impacts of rent forgiveness may also be offset in some cases by emergency financial assistance predicated on the landlord’s compliance with all health, safety, and habitability laws

- Emergency Rental Assistance. To the extent that unpaid rent is not forgiven, ensure that rental assistance is available after the eviction moratorium expires. An emergency rental assistance program should be created to minimize the burden on low-income tenants and is predicated on the landlord’s compliance with all health, safety, and habitability laws.
- Affordable and reliable transit.
 - Immediate fare-free services. In this crisis, transit operators taking fares from riders is downright dangerous both to transit operators and passengers who need to be practicing social distancing. Right now, the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit) and Santa Clara Valley Transit Agency have both waived fares for services. Other agencies need incentives to do this, which is another reason why emergency funding for transit is critical.
 - Permanent free transit passes for vulnerable riders. In the long-run, formally establish fare-free transit passes for youth, college students, and seniors using the funding sources listed below. This approach is a critical part of the recovery package that will help vulnerable populations get back to school, jobs, and to health care.

The emergency transit funding from the federal government will not be sufficient and the state of California must provide additional support both for short-term emergency relief and for our long-term recovery efforts. Funding to pursue this and other transit operations strategies include:

- Pass emergency legislation that temporarily moves all funds from the Transit and Intercity Rail and Capital Program, a competitive grant program for large capital projects, to the Low Carbon Transit Operations Program, state funding that is distributed to nearly every California transit agency. California must shift funding from expanding new transit stations to instead prioritizing immediate, essential bus and rail operations.
- Redirect all legally-moveable funds (minus bicycle and pedestrian projects) from the State Transportation Improvement Program, and a minimum of 30 percent of the Trade Corridor Enhancement and Solutions for Congested Corridors programs, to transit operations. This transfer would provide \$180 million to keep transit running, while maintaining funding to improve biking and walking infrastructure -- which is critical to keep our population healthy and well-connected to transit.

III. DELIVER PROSPERITY AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY TO PRIORITY POPULATIONS

There is no better time than now to deploy strategic climate investments that create family-sustaining green jobs and accelerate our transition away from fossil fuels. Investing in strategies that put impacted

workers and businesses back to work to reboot and strengthen our society and economy has to be a focal part of our recovery plan.

All levels of government should be exploring ways to massively invest in planet-saving infrastructure and do so in meaningful collaboration with priority communities that have historically borne the brunt of poverty and pollution.

- Deploy resources to electrify all buildings and transportation.
 - Electrification can provide environmental and social justice communities access to major benefits such as cleaner air, healthier homes, good jobs and empowered workers. Electrification also grants access to affordable clean transportation and energy to reduce monthly energy bills, while helping the state meet its climate goals, including a net-zero carbon economy and 100 percent clean electricity by 2045. While electrification has promising benefits for residents and for the state, the rollout of policies at both the local and state level must be undertaken equitably. Decision makers must ensure that environmental and social justice communities are supported to transition to all-electric homes and transportation.
- Explore establishing a jobs guarantee in California.
 - Guaranteeing employment to all state residents willing to work must be a priority for our state government. Thousands of Californians are already out of work and may be soon joined by many more. At the same time we will need a robust workforce for the near-term COVID-19 recovery and for the long-term climate fight. Californians looking to get back to work can do so by meeting community-identified needs in the public and non-profit sectors to take up any slack in private for-profit sector employment. These will include jobs in sustainable energy and energy efficiency retrofitting, mass transit and “complete streets” that promote safe bike and pedestrian traffic, EV charging infrastructure deployment, regional food systems based on sustainable organic agriculture, clean manufacturing, infrastructure, and public services (education, youth programs, child care, senior care, etc).
- Deploy the massive purchasing power of the state government to create markets for California-made products.
 - The state government spends millions of dollars each year to purchase goods and services. We should require whenever possible for the government to purchase California-made products, and use large state procurement commitments as a tool to create demand for new California-made sustainable goods and to develop particular domestic clean energy industries. To guarantee that California purchasing power results in family sustaining jobs we should require all procurement to include the following requirements:
 - Pay all employees at least \$15 per hour;
 - Guarantee employees at least 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave;
 - Maintain fair scheduling practices;

- Ensure that employees may exercise collective bargaining rights, such as by posting notices of collective bargaining rights and maintaining complete neutrality with regard to union organizing; and
 - Employ individuals with barriers to employment and contract with minority, women, LGBTQ, and veteran owned business enterprises.
- Expand public and employee ownership.
 - Leverage existing public agency spending to invest in sustainable businesses including cooperatives and non-profits by providing contracts, grants and loans with an emphasis on small, locally-based companies that keep the wealth created by local labor circulating in the community rather than being drained off to enrich absentee investors.

IV. BUILD THE RESILIENCE OF PRIORITY POPULATIONS FOR A RESILIENT CALIFORNIA

Preparation works. That is one of the biggest lessons we should learn from this global pandemic. The world watched, instead of preparing, for two months while China was in the midst of a virus outbreak. Some of our leaders dismissed any risk to our population, then denied the severity of the illness and outbreak, and when they finally reacted and haphazardly tried to manage the pandemic, it was too late. COVID-19 was everywhere in the U.S.

The similarities with the climate crisis are striking. The signs of climate change are everywhere and undeniable. But instead of preparing we are mostly watching, and some of our leaders refuse to acknowledge the severity of climate change and some still deny that it is happening at all.

We are not too late to fight climate change but we must act quickly. We must prioritize building the resilience of community and individuals, which means increasing the capacity for households, communities, and regions to adapt to changing conditions and to maintain and regain functionality and vitality in the face of stress or disturbance. It is the capacity of a system, be it an individual or a community, to deal with change positively and to use shocks and disturbances to spur renewal and innovative thinking.

Priority populations are seeing the most severe health outcomes from COVID-19, and will also see the most severe impacts of climate change. These are the communities where most of our essential workforce lives and, now more than ever, we know these communities are vital to our survival.

- Collaborate with priority communities to develop and pass legislation to pursue a no less than \$10 billion bond measure to help the state recover from COVID-19 and build long-term resilience to climate change.
 - To advance equity and address the unique needs of the most vulnerable in our state the bond proposal must:
 - Secure adequate climate resilience funding for projects providing direct and meaningful benefits to priority communities;
 - Create a process to define “vulnerable populations” in the context of climate adaptation and resilience;

- Include procedural equity provisions to ensure robust and meaningful public participation, particularly from priority populations;
 - Provide funding for capacity building and technical assistance;
 - Include strong anti-displacement provisions and other protections for renters, businesses, cultural institutions and neighborhood serving facilities;
 - Connect workforce training opportunities to jobs created by the bond funding, while prioritizing low income residents with employment barriers.
- Support AB 2577 (Chiu) - regional mapping platform to identify vulnerable populations most impacted by climate change.
 - In recent years, California experienced severe drought, record-breaking high temperatures and devastating wildfires. The state, however, currently lacks a comprehensive way to identify communities that will be most impacted by climate disasters including public transit-dependent populations such as the elderly, young children, people who are disabled, outdoor workers, low-income communities, immigrant and refugee communities, and indigenous people. AB 2577 will fill this gap by creating a new integrated climate vulnerability mapping platform that consolidates and updates existing data to identify California's communities who are most vulnerable to climate change.
- Fund missing strategies that build the resilience of vulnerable populations.
 - Community-based emergency evacuation plans for sensitive populations (seniors, homebound, linguistically isolated, rural communities)
 - Post-disaster safety net funding for displaced low-income renters
 - Funding for housing improvements (weatherization/seismic improvements, insulation, air filters) that includes anti-displacement mechanisms. Funding to protect trailer parks and mobile homes during disasters
 - Community resilience centers
 - Clean energy microgrids
 - Solar + storage to provide energy for essential facilities (especially during power shutdowns) that provide food, drinking water, shelter etc. such as schools, community centers, emergency shelters, healthcare centers, places of worship, fueling stations
 - Funding to protect communities from damage to hazardous facilities during climate disasters like power plants
 - Modular solar and storage for homes, especially for people dependent on medical equipment
 - Funding for affordable air conditioning
 - Funding for urban forestry and greening
 - Communication infrastructure for emergency preparedness (multi-lingual) / alert system (coordinate with SB 160)
 - Innovative insurance policies/products and other investments that can provide financial support pre- and post-disaster, especially for home repairs and rent support in case of displacement

- Program that provides financial support for emergency items pre-, during and post-disaster including water, food, travel support, accommodations/shelter, flashlight, radio, etc.
- Vulnerability assessments of critical infrastructure and public services, focusing on their capacity to withstand changing climate conditions
- Funding for transportation including for free public transit during climate disasters, for evacuation routes during climate disasters, for outreach to vulnerable communities about evacuation routes, for transportation services such as transit hubs that provide shade, water, etc.)
- Do not delay or weaken standards that protect public health, air and climate.
 - Some of the state's biggest polluters are using this public health emergency as an excuse to weaken public health protections. Weakening or delaying needed health-based standards would damage both our economy and our health. Smart regulatory standards drive innovation and save lives and money. While the Trump Administration continues, even during this crisis, to roll back sensible standards at the behest of polluters, California must stand firm in defense of public health. State government and agencies must provide strong leadership at this time and not allow industry or local regulators to backslide on science-based solutions that provide measurable health, environmental, and economic benefits.
- Expedite access to full scope medi-cal for elders (65+) regardless of immigration status.
 - We thank Governor Newsom for including the Health4Elders proposal in the initial 2020-21 budget, but are concerned that in his April 2 press briefing he hinted that he might back off from this commitment. Elders in our families are a high risk group for experiencing severe complications and even death from COVID-19. The Health4Elders proposal would provide full-scope Medi-Cal to an estimated 27,000 low-income undocumented elders ages 65 and older by removing immigration status as an eligibility exclusion.
- Prioritize emergency funding & resources for primary care clinics & community health centers.
 - As health systems become overburdened with COVID-19 case loads, the state must support licensed community clinics and health centers, which provide essential health services to underserved communities and low-income neighborhoods regardless of a family's ability to pay for care. Local clinics and community health centers are California's health care safety net for many neighborhoods that lack access to amenities and provide essential care for California's ethnically diverse neighborhoods, women, and children.
- Expand access to free telehealth & internet services for low-income families.
 - Telehealth services are critical during shelter-in-place to give families access to health screenings and to reduce the burden of in-person patient visits. The legislature should waive telehealth medical fees and copays during this time to encourage more

Californians to seek preventative screening and consultation and stop the spread of COVID-19. Furthermore, the need for telehealth emphasizes how vital it is for households to have affordable internet access. Internet service allows us to respond quickly in a crisis and get vital health and safety information. However, many low income households lack access to affordable internet services. We need an immediate response: ban disconnections for nonpayment and implement a statewide all-fiber infrastructure project to help bridge the digital divide and provide jobs to help soften the impact of the economic downturn caused by COVID-19.

This is our moment to collectively rewrite the story of what our world will become and what is possible when we work together. It demands that we let go of failed systems from the past and employ innovative strategies, so that we can build a new tomorrow together. We welcome the opportunity to work with you to create a just and sustainable future.

Respectfully,
Alvaro Sanchez
Environmental Equity Director
The Greenlining Institute