RECOMMENDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF INTEGRATED MAPPING PLATFORM TO IDENTIFY VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN CONTEXT OF CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE (SEE AB 2577 BILL TEXT)

TO: Members of Governor Newsom’s Task Force on Business and Jobs Recovery
FROM: 90+ Organizations that Signed on to Just Recovery Recommendations for Governor Newsom’s Task Force

Important Note: This platform is intended to be complementary to and modeled by CalEnviroScreen. It is NOT intended to replace CalEnviroScreen.

SUMMARY
This bill lays the groundwork to protect California’s most vulnerable populations from climate change by requiring the Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to consolidate existing data and develop an integrated climate vulnerability mapping platform.

BACKGROUND
The past several years of natural disasters underline how the climate crisis disproportionately impacts the state’s most vulnerable communities. During 2011 to 2016, the state experienced a severe drought and broke numerous high temperature records, conditions that most impacted our agricultural and rural communities. These five years were followed by devastating wildfires that destroyed thousands of homes and affected the respiratory health of millions. These disasters especially impact the elderly, young children, people who are disabled, outdoor workers, low income communities, immigrant and refugee communities, and indigenous people.

There are existing frameworks that provide data identify and depict the communities most impacted by climate change, including the California Department of Public Health’s Climate Change and Health Vulnerability Indicators (CCHViz), California Energy Commission’s Social Vulnerability to Climate Change Report, and Four Twenty Seven’s California Heat Assessment Tool. However, they are not in broad use.

A model of a comprehensive mapping tool to communicate complex information for planning and decision making is CalEnviroScreen, which is a place based cumulative impact screening methodology used to protect communities overburdened by the impacts of pollution and poverty. However, CalEnviroScreen is not intended to depict climate vulnerability, and it does not include data on the impact of climate change or adaptive capacity.

THE PROBLEM
Although there is mounting evidence of the unequal effects of climate change, there is no existing tool that holistically displays the data needed to identify the communities most vulnerable to climate change. Moreover, the existing tools that do exist are not centralized or consolidated into a user-friendly platform, making it difficult to easily access the data and effectively inform policy action. This leads policymakers and advocates to develop and implement climate adaptation policies and programs without the benefit of thorough data to inform their decisions.

THE SOLUTION
OPR must lead a process to create 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. This centralized tool will give stakeholders, legislators and the State an easily accessible foundation to consider, analyze, and combat the ongoing climate crisis. Funding to develop this online platform could be supported by technology partners on the Taskforce like ESRI.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
- APEN Report: Mapping Resilience: A Blueprint for Thriving in the Face of Climate Disasters
- Public Health Alliance of Southern California’s Healthy Places Index is a strong starting place for a data visualization tool (includes CCHViz mentioned above and novel analysis on COVID-19)
The recommendations above are an expansion of concepts included in the Just Recovery Recommendations for Governor Newsom’s Task Force, which was supported by the 90+ organizations below. While the organizations below support the overall concepts, they have not yet had a chance to review the detailed recommendations we shared in this letter.

Please contact Amee Raval (amee@apen4ej.org) for more information about the recommendations.

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