

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AB 3256 (GARCIA ET AL.) TO PRIORITIZE EQUITY, JOB CREATION AND COMMUNITY CLIMATE RESILIENCE

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

THE CHALLENGE

The impacts and risks from COVID-19 are dramatically different depending on who you are and where you live – whether you have a good job, access to healthcare, stable housing, and paid sick leave. Working class communities of color including Latinx, Black, AAPI, and Indigenous communities are being hit hardest by COVID-19 and are feeling the impacts of the collapsing global economy, health system, and social safety net as a result of the pandemic. The simultaneous and ongoing threats from the climate crisis such as wildfires and extreme heat days will inevitably worsen these unequal health outcomes and economic conditions. The overlapping impacts of the pandemic alongside climate change necessitates a targeted response that prioritizes the needs of communities with the least resources to respond. In short, COVID-19 vulnerability is environmental vulnerability.

THE SOLUTION

In the wake of COVID-19, we strongly encourage the development of a bond proposal that meets a triple bottom line of (1) creating genuine economic stimulus, (2) meeting community climate resiliency needs, and (3) centering equity to support communities hit hardest by COVID-19 and climate change. 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. The following are recommendations for equitable investments and projects that will support communities hit hardest by COVID-19 and climate change. In addition to the new programs we outline below, we encourage continued investment in existing foundational programs in light of COVID-19 that we know have a track record of delivering critical and meaningful impact in the places that need it the most. These programs must meet minimum investment thresholds in priority communities (35 percent) established by SB 535 (De León, 2012) and AB 1550 (Gomez, 2016) that should now increase to address the devastating impacts of COVID-19.

Invest Bond Funding in Programs that Deliver Meaningful Community Benefits

New Programs

- **Community Resilience Centers.** Emergency funding for neighborhood-based essential service providers offering crisis response is needed to address increased costs and support the uninterrupted delivery of essential social and health resources and outreach services in response to the current pandemic. Grants and subsidies should be offered to community institutions providing emergency response services at eligible existing community facilities such as senior and youth centers, park and recreation sites, libraries, health clinics, schools, food banks, emergency shelters, healthcare centers, and places of worship. In order to protect communities from the additive and immediate threats anticipated from future wildfires, power outages, and evacuations, these community facilities should also be offered funding to secure additional emergency resources and staffing to provide delivery of clean backup power, drinking water, air filters, cooling, food storage, and economic and emergency assistance. This assistance could include financial support for emergency supplies (e.g., water, food, travel support, shelter). Establishment of resilient hubs should involve developing community-based emergency evacuation plans and routes especially for the elderly, disabled, linguistically isolated, and rural communities. Access to these facilities must be intentionally designed to be safe and inclusive to all community residents regardless of immigration status.
- **Distributed Clean Energy Systems.** Distributed clean energy systems (e.g., rooftop solar, storage, demand response, microgrids) are a powerful tool for reducing harm from power outages while at the same time improving air quality and offering economic savings. In the face of growing wildfire threats, this infrastructure is drastically needed for medically dependent residents, working-class communities, and community facilities. We urge the State to further invest in clean, zero-emission, and community-led microgrids that integrate energy efficiency, renewable distributed generation, energy storage, and other technologies in low-income housing and community facilities to protect communities from wildfires and associated power outages.

Foundational Programs

- **Low-Income Weatherization Program.** The COVID crisis reveals that it is more vital than ever to ensure our residents' homes are healthy, clean, and structurally resilient. Housing retrofits, such as those delivered through the Low-Income Weatherization Program, improve ventilation, energy efficiency, weatherization, and hardening to

support affordable and high-quality public housing units. Streamlining delivery of energy upgrades and home health remediation efforts is also being undertaken with the implementation of APEN-sponsored bill AB 1232: Healthy Homes Act (Gloria, 2019), which will ensure that disadvantaged communities can access and maximize these integrated benefits quickly. Other strategies to promote home-based resilience that could be integrated alongside this program include offering financial support for air conditioning access and use to combat the health impacts of extreme heat as well as innovative insurance policies to finance pre- and post-disaster home repairs.

- **Urban and Community Forestry/Urban Greening.** Lessons learned during the COVID crisis have only served to reinforce the need to ensure all communities have access to green space and trees to support strong mental and physical health. No less than six studies over the last six weeks have linked air pollution to higher coronavirus death rates and kids with asthma in heavy air pollution areas to greater coronavirus risk.¹ Trees and associated urban green infrastructure are critical human health tools that pull pollutants out of the atmosphere while also mitigating for urban heat islands, reducing risks from flooding, and reducing greenhouse gases.
- **Transformative Climate Communities.** This program advances community-led decision-making to address the needs of residents and achieve local transformation. Multiple emission-reducing services delivered in a coordinated way – like affordable solar-powered housing with access to public transit and active transportation – can transform long-neglected neighborhoods into models of economic and environmental sustainability. Funding should support development and implementation of robust climate adaptation and resilience plans and projects that are community-driven and respond to community-identified needs.

Invest Bond Funding in Resilient Workforce Development and Training

As job opportunities are created through bond investments, we recommend the following:

- For all projects funded by the bond, at least 40% of total hours worked must go toward individuals with employment barriers and at least 50% of total business contracts must go to disadvantaged business enterprises.
- Prioritize workforce education and training, contractor, and job opportunities for disadvantaged communities and vulnerable populations.
- Require at least 20% of journeyman hours to be performed by apprentices.
- Include the use of a community benefits agreement, community workforce agreement, or project labor agreement.
- Contract with disadvantaged business enterprises, including minority-, women-, and veteran-owned small businesses.
- Require private contractors and subcontractors to demonstrate relevant certifications, safety protocols, and high road labor standards, such as payment of prevailing wages.
- Coordinate with local state-approved apprenticeship programs, local building trade councils, or the California Conservation Corps and certified community conservation corps for recruitment and to strengthen local job pathways.
- Prioritize public sector employment.
- Protect both homecare workers and their clients who are on the frontlines of resilience for many of our most vulnerable populations including the elderly, disabled, and immuno-compromised.
- Expand the public sector workforce to effectively respond to any shock event and provide crucial social services that form the safety net. A well-trained public sector workforce dedicated to resilience (e.g., social workers, public health nurses, community health nurses, counselors, and educators) would increase capacity for a coordinated and effective emergency response in partnership with community advocates.
- Explore establishing a jobs guarantee to all state residents willing to work. We will need a robust workforce for the near-term COVID-19 recovery and for the long-term climate fight. These will include jobs in sustainable energy and energy efficiency retrofitting, mass transit and “complete streets” that promote safe bike and pedestrian traffic, electric vehicle charging infrastructure deployment, regional food systems based on sustainable organic agriculture, clean manufacturing, infrastructure, and public services.

Provide Funding For Capacity Building And Technical Assistance: At least 10% of bond funds should be allocated to technical assistance and capacity building to support priority communities with the least resources and help ensure they have access to programs and funding opportunities.

¹ “New Research Links Air Pollution to Higher Coronavirus Death Rates.” New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/climate/air-pollution-coronavirus-covid.html>; “Kids with asthma who live near heavy air pollution face greater risk from coronavirus.” Environmental Health News. <https://www.ehn.org/children-asthma-coronavirus-2645618537.html>

Include Anti-displacement Provisions: The bond should include anti-displacement provisions, especially for any infrastructure projects for disadvantaged communities and vulnerable populations because these projects can lead to gentrification and displacement.

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.

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