



Assemblymember Rob Bonta, 18th Assembly District

AB 1062: Environmental Justice Small Grants

SUMMARY

AB 1062 requires all the Boards, Departments and Offices within the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) to contribute no less than 1 percent of their annual budget to the Environmental Justice Small Grant Program. AB 1062 would also update the grant program's existing guidelines.

BACKGROUND/EXISTING LAW

Cal/EPA's Environmental Justice (EJ) Small Grant program was established in 2002 to fund community groups working to address the disproportionate burden of pollution in low-income communities and communities of color. The grant funds education and stakeholder engagement on environmental problems.

However, there is no permanent source of funding for the program. Current practice is for the Assistant Secretary for Environmental Justice to annually solicit contributions to the program from Boards, Departments and Agencies. This is an unreliable, inefficient and unsustainable source of funding for the program. Since finalizing regulations for the program in 2004, the grant program has only dispersed funds 5 times.

This is one of the only grant programs in the state that are available directly to community-based organizations and that can fund the full range of environmental justice. Across California, communities are working to address environmental health-related illnesses such as asthma, secure clean drinking water, clean-up abandoned toxic sites, learn about environmental decision-making that impacts their communities, and much more.

The EJ Small Grant guidelines have not been revised, despite significant advances in environmental justice work throughout the state. Since the program's passage in 2002, community groups have grown their capacity to advance environmental justice solutions. After a decade, many groups are working on implementing physical projects that address environmental justice issues, such as planning for open-space in park-poor areas or installation of air filters to address poor air quality. The Environmental Justice Grant program guidelines need to

be updated to include the changing nature of environmental justice work in communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE IN CALIFORNIA

According to Cal/EPA's CalEnviroScreen2.0 tool, approximately 20% of Californians live in communities that face a high burden of public health issues, environmental exposures, and socioeconomic stressors.

According to the CalEnviroScreen2.0 results, "Hispanic/Latinos and African Americans disproportionately reside in highly impacted communities while other groups tend to reside disproportionately in less impacted communities."

BILL DETAILS

AB 1062 will help provide our most vulnerable communities of color with the tools they need to fight against environmental health hazards in their communities, greatly reducing their quality of life.

AB 1062 will ensure EJ Small Grants will be continuously funded. It will require the Boards, Departments and Agencies to contribute no less than 1% of the total annual budget to the grant program to ensure there is a Cal/EPA-wide contribution.

The bill will also add one additional grant objective to the program: implementation of physical projects that address environmental justice issues, such as planning for open-space in park-poor areas or installation of air filters to address poor air quality.

SUPPORT

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (co-sponsor)
California Environmental Justice Alliance (co-sponsor)

OPPOSE

None on file.

CONTACT

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