



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

For Immediate Release

December 1, 2020

New Report Calls on Community Choice Aggregators & Other Energy Stakeholders to Rise Above Systemic Inequities in Energy Sector

Report Provides Key Recommendations for CCAs and Energy Utility Companies to Prioritize Energy Equity and Democracy in Communities of Color, Households with Low Income

SACRAMENTO, CA—The California Environmental Justice Alliance (“CEJA”) released a new report today that calls for energy justice to be a central part of energy democracy—through the expansion of community owned energy systems, key measures that strengthen the power of communities in energy decision-making to maximize the health, economic, and energy benefits for environmental justice communities—and a statewide environmental justice oversight body to ensure accountability in the energy sector.

The report, “[Building a Just Energy Future: A Framework For Community Choice Aggregators To Power Equity and Democracy In California.](#)” provides a framework and best practices for the equitable development of community-owned energy systems for frontline community members. While the report focuses on CCAs, the recommendations included have broad applicability and can point the way for other players in California’s energy supply. Key areas covered include strategies on:

- *Coordination with local, community-based organizations (CBOs);*
- *Accessible information and outreach;*
- *Community-driven, local program design;*
- *Transparent decision-making; and*
- *Local and state accountability.*

“California is at a crossroads of energy justice in 2020: either we commit to equitable solutions or we leave hundreds of thousands of people behind, which in the long run may not only be more expensive for our energy system but also leave us ill-equipped to deal with the full scale of the climate crisis. Community Choice Aggregators represent one piece of CEJA’s vision for a more just and equitable California,” said Jose Torres, CEJA Energy Equity Manager. “The *Building a Just Energy Future* report provides common-sense recommendations for county and city-level decision makers, regional



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

utilities, energy advocates and lawmakers to improve relationships with community members and incorporate frontline expertise into state-wide policy recommendations.”

More than 10 million residents will likely fall within the jurisdiction of CCAs in upcoming years. Many CCAs are lowering bills for customers and exceeding the California Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) targets. As the state phases in more clean and renewable energy to comply with our SB 100 energy commitments, CCAs will be a critical piece of the energy transition.

Building A Just Energy Future was developed by CEJA in consultation with CCA representatives and other environmental and community-based organizations. The full report and executive summary are accessible online:

- [**Building a Just Energy Future: A Framework For Community Choice Aggregators To Power Equity and Democracy In California**](#)
- [**Executive Summary**](#)

The strategies laid out in the report offer CCAs and other energy stakeholders key pathways that can help address inequities in communities that lack access to clean energy, and are already overburdened by power plants and other sources of pollution.

“My brother and I have suffered from moving closer to a power plant twelve years ago. We both developed asthma, and he has suffered from multiple asthma attacks since then. The Mandalay Generating Station is the closest power plant, but it’s not the only one in the city. Because of these power plants, my community is unable to breathe clean air and end up with respiratory issues.” — Kimberly Garcia, Oxnard Resident

The report highlights the rapid emergence of CCAs across California as an opportunity to redesign the energy system with far-reaching benefits for customers, ratepayers, and environmental justice communities. Unlike investor-owned utilities (IOUs) which are private companies operated in large part by shareholders, CCAs are formed by local city and county governments and governed by boards of elected officials who are supposed to engage communities and allow them to lead. However, this is not guaranteed. *Building a Just Energy Future* offers key local and state recommendations for CCAs and energy utilities to therefore commit to centering equity and democracy.

“Accountability can only happen when community-based environmental justice organizations have a seat at the table in advancing energy equity and energy democracy. In a recent example for us in San Francisco, People Organizing to Demand



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

Environmental & Economic Rights (PODER) co-led a multi-stakeholder process to come up with strategies and actions to advance the city’s residential building electrification efforts,” said Antonio Diaz, Organizational Director. “We co-created the process, co-facilitated a series of meetings, assisted in synthesizing the stakeholder feedback, and co-wrote the strategies and actions. Providing opportunities to participate is an important first step. Having meaningful collaboration ensures accountability.”

“Energy is not a commodity—access to energy is a human right. All communities have the right to power their homes in a regenerative and ecologically just manner. Community Choice Aggregators have a unique opportunity to guide the just energy transition - so long as the right mechanisms and practices are in place that let EJ communities lead,” said Alexis Sutterman, CEJA Program Associate. “Right now, we should explore legislation that would provide statewide environmental justice oversight to energy utilities and CCAs. As California recovers from the COVID-19 economic recession, we must prioritize energy equity, and help coordinate utilities and CCAs to create a diverse, balanced portfolio of energy resources that center needs of environmental justice communities.”

#####